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# The Greek-Turkish dispute in the Aegean Sea its ramifications for NATO and the prospects for resolution

Mann, Stephen.

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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

## **Monterey, California**



## **THESIS**

**THE GREEK-TURKISH DISPUTE IN THE AEGEAN SEA:  
ITS RAMIFICATIONS FOR NATO AND THE PROSPECTS  
FOR RESOLUTION**

by

Stephen Mann

March 2001

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RAMIFICATIONS FOR NATO AND THE PROSPECTS FOR RESOLUTION**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since 1974 the Aegean Sea has been a topic of much dispute for Greece and Turkey. In spite of many attempts to resolve the problems, the dispute goes on to this day. Over the years it has cost both countries some lives, cost Greece and Turkey politically and economically, and has been a detriment to NATO defense planning and operations. Continued tensions therefore not only hold the potential for disastrous war between two members of the same alliance but also hold the potential to pull other countries into this conflict.

Stability in the region and, consequently, Europe is therefore at risk and must be restored through resolution of these disputes between Greece and Turkey. Resolution has not been attained, though, mainly because of each country's intense nationalism and pervasive mistrust of the other country. This nationalism and mistrust of the other country must be overcome if a resolution is to be reached. Fortunately, the current governments of both Greece and Turkey are much more moderate and pro-resolution than their predecessors, and an ironic amelioration of relations thanks to devastating earthquakes in both Greece and Turkey in 1999 indicate that the time is ripe for a push toward resolution.

This thesis therefore examines the Aegean dispute in detail, shows its impact on NATO, looks at the attempts at resolution over the past thirty years, and discusses the current prospects for resolution.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since 1974 the Aegean Sea has been a topic of much dispute for Greece and Turkey. These two countries have been and still are quarrelling over delimitation (or assigning boundaries) of the continental shelf and, therefore, rights to any natural resources in the continental shelf, the breadth of territorial waters, control of the Aegean airspace, demilitarization/militarization of eastern Aegean islands, and ownership of various islands, islets, and rocks in the Aegean. In spite of many attempts to resolve the problems, the dispute goes on to this day. Over the years it has cost both countries some lives, cost Greece and Turkey politically and economically, and has caused both countries to live at unnecessarily high states of tension and military readiness. Continued tensions therefore not only hold the potential for disastrous war between two members of the same alliance but also hold the potential to pull other countries into this conflict.

The dispute has also been a detriment to NATO defense planning and operations. Not only did Greece withdraw from NATO's integrated military structure from 1974-1980, but Greek and Turkish disparity brought confusion, delay, and deadlock to NATO budgetary and logistical planning and operations as well as to approval of the 1992 command structure. NATO's operational readiness and efficiency, especially in the southeastern sector, were consequently far less than they should have been.

Stability in the Aegean region and, consequently, Europe is therefore at risk and must be restored through resolution of these disputes between Greece and Turkey. Resolution has not been attained, though, mainly because of each country's intense nationalism and pervasive mistrust of the other country. This nationalism and mistrust of

the other country has prevented both parties from making a resolute, dedicated effort to solve the dispute and must be overcome if a resolution is to be reached. Fortunately, the current governments of both Greece and Turkey, though, are much more moderate and pro-resolution than their predecessors, and an ironic amelioration of relations thanks to devastating earthquakes in both Greece and Turkey in 1999 indicate that the time is ripe for a push toward resolution.

This thesis therefore examines the Aegean dispute in detail, shows its impact on NATO, and looks at the attempts at resolution over the past thirty years. It concludes by discussing several factors that indicate, in spite of each country's nationalism, that the current prospects for resolution are extremely promising.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

For centuries, relations between Greeks and Turks, and subsequently between their nation-states Greece and Turkey, have been tumultuous. Periods of peace have existed, yet many more periods of conflict have dominated their affairs. Notwithstanding a period of relative harmony between these countries from the late 1920's into the 1950's, the last century, and especially since 1974, has been marred by mistrust, anger, hatred, threats of war, and even actual fighting. The disputes rage over two separate yet related topics: 1.) Cyprus and 2.) the Aegean Sea. For complete resolution of the rift between Greece and Turkey the Cyprus issue must be solved in conjunction with the problems in the Aegean; a rise in tensions or an unpleasant incident in one subsequently hardens attitudes in the other. The disputes in the Aegean Sea are, though, quite complicated by themselves and will be the focus of this thesis. These disputes have caused the unnecessary buildup of army and navy forces over the years and have even caused threats of war to be made, sporadically resulting in short-lived incidents of armed fighting. They have also caused the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), of which both countries are members, to operate less effectively and efficiently than it should have. The disputes therefore not only hold the potential for disastrous war between two members of the same alliance but also hold the potential to pull other countries into this conflict. Stability in the region and, consequently, Europe as a whole, is therefore at risk and must be restored through resolution of these disputes between Greece and Turkey.

The Aegean dispute is centered on several main issues: 1.) delimitation (or assigning boundaries) of the continental shelf and, therefore, rights to any natural resources in the continental shelf, 2.) the breadth of territorial waters, 3.) control of the Aegean airspace, 4.) demilitarization/militarization of eastern Aegean islands, and 5.) ownership of various islands, islets, and rocks in the Aegean.<sup>1</sup> All are separate disputes but at the same time inter-related. Though this thesis will discuss each dispute separately it is practically impossible to solve one of the problems without also solving the others at the same time.

It is important to resolve these disputes in the Aegean in the near future for many reasons that are discussed throughout this thesis. Recent negotiations and warming relations have been encouraging, yet the negotiations are still limited in scope and short in duration. Throughout the thirty years of the recent conflict and including current negotiations, one major factor has stymied the resolution process. This major factor is national pride coupled with a pervasive mistrust of the other country. Both countries must overcome this powerful psychological barrier; if not, the conflict will fester forever.

This thesis will cover a brief history of the modern conflict and then discuss, in Chapter II, each dispute in detail. Chapter III will show the impact that the overall dispute has had on NATO, and Chapter IV will summarize the many attempts to resolve the disputes. To conclude the thesis, Chapter V will reflect upon the main obstacle to resolution and then discuss the prospects for resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> *Turkish-Greek Relations, Aegean Problems*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adea/default.htm> [12 September 2000].



## **A. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT**

The history of relations between the two nations and countries goes back centuries. It is a history full of wars, injustices, suspicion, and hatred based on differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, and politics. Memories of this tumultuous history have undoubtedly influenced contemporary Greeks and Turks; though these memories are not among the root causes of the five Aegean disputes discussed in this thesis, they heavily contribute to the main obstacle impeding resolution, nationalism and a mistrust of the other country.

The current dispute really has its origins in the Treaty of Lausanne. This Treaty ended the Greek-Turkish fighting of the early 1920's that had erupted when World War I settlements took territory from Turkey and placed her under Allied control. In spite of her significant postwar territorial gains, Greece additionally invaded the Anatolian coast and tried to conquer Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey); Turkey fought against these attempts and at the same time fought for her independence from the occupying Allied powers. Signed in 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne ensured independence of the Turkish territories; it also established the Aegean status quo and "a delicate balance between Turkey and Greece by harmonizing the vital interests and legitimate rights of both countries including those in the Aegean Sea. The basic thinking of the Lausanne Treaty was to grant limited areas of maritime jurisdiction to the coastal states and leave the remaining parts of the Aegean to the common benefit of Turkey and Greece."<sup>2</sup> Its edicts provided equity between the countries. It gave sovereignty of the Aegean islands, except for Gökçeada and Bozcaada (which guard the entrance to the Turkish Dardanelles) and except for the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Dodecanese islands (a group of 12 islands off the southwestern Anatolian coast owned at this time by Italy), to Greece. [See Figure 1.] It appeased Turkey, though, by ensuring various levels of demilitarization of the Greek islands near the Turkish coastline. The Treaty also tried to resolve the controversial and painful issue of Greek and Turkish



Figure 1. The Aegean Sea. From The University of Texas at Austin Library, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map\\_collection/europe/Greece\\_rel96.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/europe/Greece_rel96.jpg).

minorities and helped to ease this still ongoing source of conflict from the two countries.<sup>3</sup> In sum, it provided a fairly stable regime that helped maintain peace for the next several decades and remained uncontested until the debate over the continental shelf became important.

The Treaty of Paris of 1947 (the peace treaty between Italy and the Allies, including Greece) further delineated the owner of various Aegean areas. It gave Greece ownership of the Dodecanese islands, again with limits on the level of militarization. The Dodecaneses had been Turkish since the sixteenth century and Italian since the Italian-Turkish war of 1912. The Treaty of Lausanne had in fact confirmed the Italian ownership of these islands in 1923 and was therefore superseded in this regard by the Treaty of Paris. Between 1912 and 1947 the Dodecaneses therefore had served as a sort of buffer zone between Greece and Turkey, and the Treaty of Paris upset the balance that this brought.<sup>4</sup> (These islands, with a large Greek population, were given to Greece in compensation for her sufferings in World War II; Turkey, a neutral in the War, was in no position to obstruct the transfer even if she had wished to do so.<sup>5</sup>)

A period of relative peace from 1923 until the 1950's ensued. World War II and the Cold War aided this peace, which, with both countries under a threat (or perceived threat) from Germany and Italy and the Soviet Union, respectively, caused greater political and military cooperation and caused both countries to join NATO. In addition,

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<sup>3</sup> Though not discussed in detail in this thesis, the harsh treatment over the centuries of Greek ethnic minorities by Turkey and Turkish ethnic minorities by Greece plays a large role in the nationalism and feelings of mistrust of the other country of today. Any resolution to the Greek-Turkish dispute must understand the role these hardships have played in each country's history and take the lingering problems into consideration so they do not remain outstanding.

<sup>4</sup> "Isles Torn by Geography and Politics," *The Guardian (London)*, p. 18, 10 February 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, Andrew, "The Aegean Dispute," Adelphi Paper No. 155, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, p. 3, Dorking, Great Britain, Bartholomew Press, 1979.

the two early leaders, Eleftherios Venizelos of Greece and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of Turkey, were committed to détente. The relative peace diminished, though, when ethnic violence reappeared in the mid-1950's and national priorities overtook the need for common defense. Anti-Greek riots in 1955 in Istanbul typified this ethnic tension. The ethnic tension was especially intense in Cyprus, where a delicate balance of bicomunal Greek/Turkish living existed first under British rule and later under an independent government. Relative peace was restored through the early 1960's, but tensions continued throughout the rest of the decade (and still continue today). When a rightist Greek group that was supported by the military dictatorship in Greece tried to take over the island in 1974, the Turkish government invoked its guarantor role and invaded the northern part of the island, taking over almost forty percent of the land and invoking cries of outrage from Greece.<sup>6</sup>

Though, as will be seen in Chapter II, the related conflicts in the Aegean started in November 1973, the Cyprus invasion in 1974 really caused the simmering tensions to explode into the sometimes-violent conflict that has persisted until today. The Aegean dispute therefore subsequently developed and grew more and more intense as tensions increased from the Cyprus debacle.

Additionally, in 1982 after a decade of work, most of the world's countries signed the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) creating the body of work that still governs the majority of the world's maritime regime. The signers, after much compromise, agreed upon such varied topics as pollution control and

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<sup>6</sup> Wilkinson, M. James, "Moving Beyond Conflict Prevention to Reconciliation: Tackling Greek-Turkish Hostility," A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, p. 9, Carnegie Corporation of New York, June 1999.

economic exclusion zones that prior to the signing had not been uniform around the world and thus had been under much dispute between the world's capitals. Others, such as the breadth of territorial waters, ownership of continental shelf, and control of airspace, were directly relevant to the dispute in the Aegean Sea. Greece signed and ratified UNCLOS III, but even after it was finalized Turkey did not agree with many of the regimes that UNCLOS III set up. Turkey therefore did not (and has not to this day) sign UNCLOS III and her opposition to many of the facets of UNCLOS III has been another root cause of the rift between Greece and Turkey.

Finally, tensions between the countries further increased at the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the existence of a common “enemy” caused Greece and Turkey, in spite of their long history of differences, to work together for their common defense. Since there was no longer this common enemy after 1989, both sides could now more actively pursue their own individual objectives, which caused them to stray apart and caused tensions to further increase.

The Treaty of Lausanne, Treaty of Paris, and UNCLOS III, which together established the existing status quo in the Aegean, were thus the major roots of the festering conflict between the countries throughout the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's; the regimes that they established in the Aegean were sometimes unclear and sometimes contradictory. The dispute over these regimes is to this day yet to be settled. The actual conflicts have two sides: the Greek and the Turkish. Many of the arguments of each side are understandably in their national interests while other arguments are more petty and undermining to the resolution process. It is important to understand the details of these

conflicts so that the countries can eventually work through the issues and adopt a fair and equitable solution.

## II. DETAILS OF THE CONFLICT

The root of the problem involves the delineation of sovereign rights and boundaries in the Aegean Sea, a problem that is extremely complex. The geography of the area is complicated and does not provide for an easy answer. The Aegean Sea is an irregularly shaped semi-enclosed sea of about 80,000 square miles (which is smaller in surface area than the North American Great Lakes)<sup>7</sup> surrounded on the north and west by Greece and on the east by Turkey. The Greek island of Crete bounds the Aegean to the south, leaving only narrow accesses between the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea. The Aegean also provides the only high seas<sup>8</sup> access from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea via the Dardanelles. Nearly 2400 Greek islands, plus many Turkish islands, are situated throughout its length, complicating the delimitation of maritime boundaries. The population makeup of many of these islands further complicates the problem; many Greeks live on islands very near the Turkish coastline and are nationally oriented to Greece, and Turkey feels that this close proximity could pose a threat to her homeland.

To begin with, Turkey and Greece think of the Aegean dispute in very different general terms. Of course, each side believes that the other is responsible for the disputes. Greece has a legalistic view and regards international law as the prevailing factor in the disputes. She thinks of the Aegean as (for the most part) a Greek sea and regards Turkey as following an aggressive policy that contests Greek sovereignty and sovereign rights as

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<sup>7</sup> Stearns, Monteagle, Entangled Allies: U.S. Policy Toward Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, p. 131, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout this thesis, the term “high seas” will refer to the internationally accepted definition according to UNCLOS III, that being waters beyond a state’s territorial waters (thus international waters).

well as the legal status quo in the Aegean.<sup>9</sup> The status quo of the Lausanne Treaty has, she believes, been somewhat changed because of subsequent agreements and treaties, and Turkey is ignoring the fundamental provisions of international law in making her unilateral claims.

Turkey, on the other hand, believes that the Aegean (including the sea, airspace, and continental shelf) is a common entity that should be shared equally between the two countries and that both countries should respect each other's vital interests. Resolution of the disputes should be made with regard to the political, economic, and strategic interests of both countries and not based purely on international law. She believes in the freedoms of the high seas and the air space above it and that any acquisition of new maritime areas should be fair and equitable and should be based on mutual consent.<sup>10</sup> In essence, Turkey still believes in the Lausanne status quo, where both countries as Aegean nations have equally limited maritime jurisdiction and the rest of the Sea is for mutual use. The Lausanne equity, Turkey says, should still be the driving guideline in solving the disputes in the Aegean and not necessarily, because the Aegean is a special case, the strict rules of international law.<sup>11</sup> Turkey believes that Greece regards the Aegean as a Greek sea. Turkey also believes that Greece is trying to undermine Turkish security by controlling

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<sup>9</sup> *Greek-Turkish relations*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/relations.htm> [18 September 2000].

<sup>10</sup> *Turkish-Greek Relations, Aegean Problems*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adea/default.htm> [12 September 2000].

<sup>11</sup> These rules of international law are now in some cases different from the Lausanne equity. For example, the Lausanne Treaty (nor the Treaty of Montreux or Treaty of Paris) did not discuss delineation of territorial waters, whereas now UNCLOS III sets forth guidelines for the limits of territorial waters that Greece wishes to acknowledge in the Aegean Sea and Turkey does not. The continental shelf delineation is a similar example. A final example is the militarization of the islands in the eastern Aegean: the Treaties of Lausanne set forth guidelines for the status of militarization of these islands that ensured a balance that both countries could accept. The Treaty of Montreux, though, permitted the partial remilitarization of some of the Turkish islands, and with this example as precedence Greece has taken the recent development of Article 51 of the UN Charter as defense for remilitarizing some of her islands in the area. In sum, the rules



the Aegean, that Greece still believes in the Megali Idea, and that Greece disregards Turkey's fundamental rights and interests in the Aegean.

Finally, in actuality, Greece believes that only one real dispute is lingering in the Aegean, that of the delimitation of the continental shelf. The other disputes, she believes, including territorial waters, airspace, demilitarization of certain Eastern Aegean islands, and contested islets, are readily answered by existing international law and are therefore not really even under dispute. Greece believes that these are only unilateral Turkish claims put forth against Greek sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to Greece, Turkey claims that the conflict over the delimitation of the continental shelf is not the only element among the outstanding differences – all the problems (territorial shelf, etc.) must be resolved in order to bring peace to the two countries.

#### **A. CONTINENTAL SHELF**

The actual conflicts in the Aegean did not heat up until 1 November 1973, when exploitable quantities of oil were discovered off the island of Thasos, Samothrace, and Chios. It is perhaps not coincidental that this coincided with the energy crisis of late 1973. Greece had been conducting mineral exploration beyond her territorial waters since the early 1960's; Turkey wanted to stake her claim to what she believed should be at least shared and awarded exploration rights in the eastern Aegean to the Turkish State Petroleum Company. In most places these areas were in international waters but were above areas of the continental shelf already claimed by Greece. Turkey planned on developing oilrigs that would be surrounded by a 500-meter safety zone maintained by

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and regulations set forth in the older treaties and agreements do not always jive with those set forth in the newer treaties and agreements, and this is one of the root causes of the Aegean dispute.

<sup>12</sup> *Unilateral Turkish Claims in the Aegean*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/aegeen.htm> [18 September 2000].

Turkish naval vessels.<sup>13</sup> In addition, on the same day a chart was published showing the limiting line of the Turkish continental shelf as being west of several Greek islands. Greece consequently protested. Despite proposing negotiations, Turkey sent the survey ship *Candarli* a few months later (escorted by 32 Turkish warships) to do studies in the area. Similar Turkish explorations occurred in 1976 by the survey ship *Sismik I*. These situations were eventually diffused, but the continental shelf conflict was off and running and continues to this day.

Since the incident in 1973 Greece and Turkey have yet to agree on an equitable way to delimit the continental shelf in the Aegean. It is indeed the one issue where no clear solution is alleged to in any existing law or treaty. In the same respect as the territorial sea issue, the dispute over the continental shelf ironically arose as attempts were made to produce a system of avoiding disputes (UNCLOS I – III)<sup>14</sup> – the more it was discussed in UNCLOS I – III to try to create an international system, the more that Greece and Turkey disagreed. The dispute concerns the areas of continental shelf outside Greece's current six-mile territorial sea limit in the Aegean. When the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923 it was not an issue because at that time no one was thinking about getting natural resources such as oil and natural gas from the seabed. In addition, the extent of territorial waters was (and had been for many years) only three miles and many of the islands were not even owned by Greece or Turkey (the Dodecanese islands, for example, were still owned by Italy). With the discovery of oil in the Aegean, the change of ownership of some of the Aegean islands, and the extension of territorial

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<sup>13</sup> Conostas, Dimitri, ed., The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990's, p. 14, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, p. 4. UNCLOS I was held in 1958.

waters (and thus ownership of the continental shelf under these waters), though, it has become a hotly debated topic.

UNCLOS III does not help to resolve this problem on clear-cut lines. Legally, Article 76(1) of UNCLOS III defines the continental shelf as comprising “the sea-bed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial seas throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.”<sup>15</sup> “The continental margin comprises the submerged prolongation of the land mass of the coastal State, and consists of the sea-bed and subsoil of the shelf, the slope and the rise.”<sup>16</sup> The continental shelf, though, shall not exceed 350 nm.<sup>17</sup> [See Figure 2.]

In addition, “the coastal State exercises over the continental shelf [exclusive] sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.”<sup>18</sup> But, it is important to remember that the “rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf do not affect the legal status of the superjacent waters [high seas] or of the air space above those waters” and that the “exercise of the rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf must not infringe or result in any unjustifiable interference with navigation and other rights and freedoms of other States....”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations, *The Law of the Sea: Official Text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with Annexes and Index*, p. 27, United Nations, New York, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

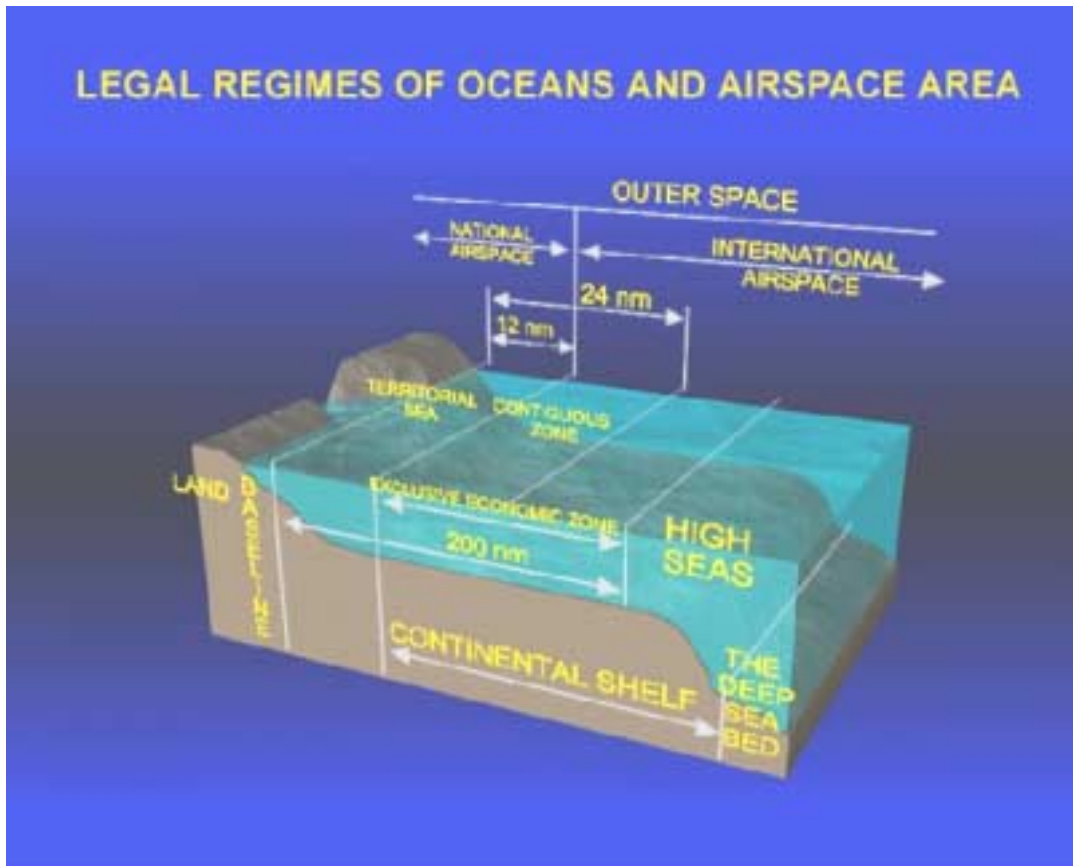


Figure 2. Legal Regimes of Oceans and Airspace Area. From Submarine Officers Advanced Course (SOAC) Presentation Law of the Sea and Airspace.

Greece's claims to the continental shelf in the Aegean are based on the legal regimes provided in the Treaty of Lausanne, the Treaty of Paris, and UNCLOS I and III. She claims that because she owns the majority of the islands in the Aegean (thus forming a Greek political continuum to the easternmost island in the Aegean), she also has sovereignty over the continental shelf based on the above definitions from the text of UNCLOS III. This claim is based on Article 121 of UNCLOS III, which states: "...the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Greece holds that because it owns the majority of the islands in the Aegean (including ones that are approximately 3 miles from Turkey’s coastline), and because each of these islands has its own continental shelf that does not exceed the allowable depth in the above definition of continental shelf, she therefore owns an almost unbroken continental shelf from the Greek mainland to the Turkish Anatolian coast.<sup>21</sup> Greece believes that the Turkish continental shelf, therefore, begins to the east of the easternmost Greek islands and not, as the Turkish claims would purport, to the west of them. Any delimitation in the area between the islands and the Greek mainland would threaten Greek sovereignty over the islands and allow Turkey to further threaten Greek security in the future. Greece believes that her claim is supported by the natural geology of the seabed of the Aegean, which is a natural extension of the islands and mainland of Greece and not, as Turkey claims, of the Anatolian coast. This claim does not, of course, in accordance with UNCLOS III, threaten Turkey’s use of the high seas or airspace above the continental shelf that is outside Greece’s territorial waters. Greece’s claims, while always with final political advantage in mind, are thus based mostly on legal arguments.

Turkish claims, on the contrary, are based more on political arguments and concerns about security and economy than on pure legalities. Turkey claims that the Lausanne and Paris Treaties’ status quo of equity between the states should still be the guiding principle in how to partition the Aegean continental shelf. In short, Turkey

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> The Journalists’ Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers, Threat in the Aegean, p. 21, Athens, The Journalists’ Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers, 1983 (?).

fears that sovereign rights in the continental shelf (in this case those of Greece) will develop into claims to full sovereignty over sea and air space, and that Greek claims to the continental shelf on the lines of the Geneva Convention will lead to the Aegean becoming quite literally a Greek sea, in which no amount of guarantees of Turkish navigation rights will safeguard her access to the high seas. Fundamental to Turkey's position is her concept of herself as a modern state which has voluntarily joined the West and which aspires in due course to full membership of the European community. To have access to the latter's ports only through Greek waters would be precarious and humiliating.<sup>22</sup>

Turkey claims that the application of Greece's arguments would result in Greece owning nearly all of the Aegean continental shelf. She claims that the Aegean continental shelf is a natural prolongation of the Anatolian land and that she therefore has natural rights of exploration and economic exploitation in that shelf. In addition, she does not believe that the islands of the Aegean are an extension of the Greek mainland because there are intervening high seas<sup>23</sup> and cites several decisions of the International Court of Justice (and other tribunals and bilateral settlements) regarding special continental shelf/island cases as supporting her view.<sup>24</sup> In effect, she wants to own areas of the Aegean continental shelf west of the Greek islands that are near the Turkish coastline. For example, a line drawn halfway between the Greek and Turkish mainlands would be one favorable option. Furthermore, Turkey refuses to accept that an island has its own continental shelf, as provided for in the UNCLOS III Treaty. Turkey has, therefore, not yet acceded to the Treaty (though she respects certain parts of it unofficially) and does not believe that she must abide by the Treaty's rules and regulations simply because, as Greece claims, they are a codification of existing

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

customary international law. Finally, Turkey stands by Article 15 of UNCLOS III, which calls for states to take into consideration historic title or other special circumstances (such as geography) that may affect a fair solution, and Article 300 of UNCLOS III, which says that “[s]tates Parties...shall exercise the rights, jurisdiction and freedoms recognized in this Convention in a manner which would not constitute an abuse of right.”<sup>25</sup> Turkey claims that the Aegean is such a special case and that UNCLOS III laws may not be applicable to the Aegean since it is a semi-enclosed sea.<sup>26</sup>

## **B. TERRITORIAL SEAS**

The conflict over territorial waters ironically was similarly spurred on by the very regime that was supposed to bring worldwide maritime stability: UNCLOS III. The conflict over territorial waters in the Aegean began in 1958 during the First United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I). Prior to 1936 both countries maintained a three-mile territorial sea limit, and since then a six-mile territorial sea limit has been the norm in the Aegean Sea. UNCLOS I in 1958 started discussions regarding extending the territorial sea limit to 12 miles; UNCLOS III formalized this twelve-mile limit when it came into force in November 1994. Most countries worldwide endorsed it, including Greece and Turkey<sup>27</sup>, but when Greece threatened to extend the territorial waters surrounding the Aegean islands (most of which she owns), Turkey objected.

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<sup>24</sup> Several such examples exist, such as settled disputes over the Channel Islands in the English Channel and disputed islands between Australia and Papua, New Guinea. See Bahcheli, Tozun, Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, p. 139-141.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, p. 104.

<sup>26</sup> Article 15 technically refers to territorial waters. Both of these Articles, though mentioned in support of Turkish territorial waters claims in many of the references, could be applied, in the opinion of the author, to the continental shelf issue also, and are strongly inferred in many of the primary and secondary readings on the Turkish views of the subject.

<sup>27</sup> Turkey supported the 12 nm limit and extended her non-Aegean territorial waters. She did not, though, support Greece’s right to extend her Aegean territorial waters; for this reason and some others, she did not (and has not to this day) signed or ratified UNCLOS III.

Expanding Greece's Aegean territorial seas to 12 miles would effectively make the Aegean more of a Greek sea than it already is and would totally enclose Turkey's Aegean coastline. Turkey found and finds this situation unacceptable.

Currently, Greece (as well as Turkey) still fixes the breadth of territorial water around her Aegean islands at 6 nautical miles (though they both fix their sea limit in non-Aegean territorial waters at 12 miles). This arrangement allows almost half of the Aegean to remain as high seas (and consequently international airspace<sup>28</sup>), which either country (as well as third countries) can use. Greece maintains the right, though, under UNCLOS III to extend this breadth to 12 nm. Twelve nautical miles is the internationally accepted standard, and she refuses to surrender this right.<sup>29</sup> She has, though, indicated to Turkey and the rest of the international maritime community that, in the interest of good international relations, she has no intention of unilaterally extending her territorial waters. As mentioned before, Greece does not see this issue as one "in dispute." In her opinion, the issue is one that has already been settled by international law (specifically UNCLOS III); Turkish attempts at making this one of the "disputed issues" is, in Greek opinion, simply her attempt to evade international law and gain more control of the Aegean.

Turkey, on the other hand, claims that Greece should not have the right to extend her territorial waters in the Aegean Sea (a semi-enclosed sea) to 12 nm and that if Greece were to do so it would lead to a state of *casus belli* (a cause of war). Turkish reasoning is as follows: extending the Greek territorial water limit to 12 nm will increase Greek waters from approximately 35 percent of the Aegean to approximately 64 percent, giving Greece direct control over almost three-fourths of the Sea. (A subsequent extension by

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<sup>28</sup> Airspace in the 6-10 nm zone around the Greek islands is, though, disputed. See Section C below.



Turkey would only increase her territorial waters from approximately 9 percent to 10 percent.) The high seas in the Aegean would be reduced from approximately 56 percent to 26 percent.<sup>30</sup> [See Figures 3 and 4.]



Figure 3. Present Distribution of Territorial Seas in the Aegean (6 nm). From Schofield and Hocknell in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, <http://fore.thomson.com/janesdata/mags/jir/jir98/images/g2363.jpg>.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 5.



Figure 4. Possible Distribution of Territorial Seas in the Aegean (12 nm). From Schofield and Hocknell in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, <http://fore.thomson.com/janesdata/mags/jir/jir98/images/g2364.jpg>.

Such an extension would turn the Aegean into a *de facto* Greek sea, fragmenting the areas of high seas due to the scattering of the Greek islands. This would in essence confine Turkish vessels in their own territorial waters as well as block them from entering Turkish territorial waters from the Mediterranean Sea; in reality they would not actually be confined nor blocked because of the right of innocent passage, but Turkey feels that Greece would be able to control them and impose guidelines and restrictions to such

degrees as to take away the freedom of movement that they previously would have had. International traffic from third countries might also lose the freedom of unrestricted travel through formerly international Aegean waters; innocent passage does not apply to aircraft either. Since the Turkish Anatolian coast would be effectively isolated, it could directly affect the Turkish economy, security, and scientific interests and, therefore, the Turkish people. She would also lose the independence to conduct military operations on the sea and in the air of the Aegean, which could affect the defense of her state. Finally, an extension of Greek territorial waters from 6 to 12 nm would give Greece an advantage in the resolution of the continental shelf issue by automatically increasing the amount of shelf over which she has corresponding sole jurisdiction.

Turkey feels that Article 15 and Article 300 of UNCLOS III, as discussed in Section A, strongly support Turkey's claims: that extending the territorial waters from 6 to 12 nm would be an abuse of right in an area of special circumstances. Thus, in sum, she strongly opposes any extension of Greek territorial waters from 6 to 12 nm because it would adversely affect her vital interests.

### **C. AIRSPACE**

The dispute over airspace control is similar to that of continental shelf delimitation in that both relate to each country's desires to gain or maintain jurisdiction over the Aegean area and the other's opposition to these attempts. The Convention on International Civil Aviation on December 7, 1944 in Chicago established the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). "The ICAO's main purpose is to regulate international civil aviation matters in the best and safest manner."<sup>31</sup> In 1952 and

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<sup>31</sup> The Journalists' Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers, p. 24.

1958, regional conferences of ICAO, with both Greece and Turkey participating, met to divide airspace where air traffic control is exercised. The responsibility for such control was assigned to its member-countries and was divided into Flight Information Regions (FIRs). These conferences decided that except for the narrow band of Turkish national airspace off the Anatolian coast, controlled airspace over the Aegean would be part of the Athens FIR.

“This arrangement, which was purely technical, meant that all aircraft flying west from Turkey, whether civil or military, were required to file flight plans and report position as they crossed the FIR boundary a minute or so after leaving the Turkish coast.... They then came under orders of the Athens flight control centre, which was responsible for providing meteorological and other information.”<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, aircraft flying eastwards were required to report to the Istanbul control center as they crossed into the Turkish FIR a minute or so prior to crossing the Turkish coast. If the FIR boundary had been placed any further west, Greek aircraft flying to the eastern Greek islands would have been required to pass through a Turkish control zone. It was thus consistent with geography and worked well until the Turkish military action in Cyprus in 1974 raised suspicions of further military action from both sides; worried officials in both countries, but especially Turkey, believed that the airspace control regime put them at a disadvantage in the case of an attack from the air, and consequently came under dispute.

On August 4, 1974 Turkey unilaterally issued NOTAM<sup>33</sup> 714. NOTAM 714 required “all aircraft approaching Turkish airspace to report their position and flight plan on reaching the Aegean median line, which lay considerably to the west of the FIR line.

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson, p. 6.

The purpose, according to later Turkish explanation, was to enable Turkish military radar to distinguish between innocent flights and potential attackers bound for targets in Asia Minor.”<sup>34</sup> Greece believed that this went against ICAO regulations and retaliated by issuing, on September 13, NOTAM 1157, which declared the Aegean airspace unsafe due to conflicting control orders.<sup>35</sup> All major airlines subsequently suspended service in the area, direly affecting flights to the Middle East and Far East as well as both countries’ tourism and economy.

These NOTAM’s were withdrawn in 1980 and normal civil aviation was resumed in the area, yet the FIR dispute continues and is simply part of a broader struggle to gain jurisdiction over the airspace of the Aegean: since 1931 Greece has claimed 10 miles of sovereign airspace around her Aegean islands. Turkey now openly objects to this claim (prior to 1975 Turkey silently objected, as discussed below) and says that in accordance with international law<sup>36</sup> the national airspace should correspond to the breadth of territorial sea. Turkey accordingly feels that Greece’s national airspace should be 6 miles.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Greece requests that Turkey submit flight plans for her military aircraft that are operating in the Athens FIR; Turkey claims that she is not required to submit such flight plans. To establish her legal objection to the Athens FIR and to Greece’s attempt to control the Aegean airspace by attempting to make Turkey file flight

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<sup>33</sup> Notice to Airmen and Mariners – a notice to ICAO for transmission to all air users.

<sup>34</sup> Wilson, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Conostas, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> The Department of State, Proceedings of the International Civil Aviation Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November 1 – December 7, 1944, Vol. I, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1948. See Article VIII, Sections 1 and 2, pp. 138-139. UNCLOS III confirmed this rule; see United Nations, p. 3.

plans for her military aircraft, Turkey refuses to submit flight plans for her military aircraft to the Athens FIR.<sup>38</sup> In reality ICAO does not cover military aircraft but rather only civil aircraft<sup>39</sup>; therefore, Turkish refusal to submit flight plans for her military aircraft is not a violation of ICAO rules but only Greek requests.<sup>40</sup> Turkey also periodically sends military aircraft to fly into the disputed airspace (and sometimes even Greek national airspace inside 6 nm over various islands) to establish her objection to Greece's requests and to the Athens FIR. Greece accordingly protests and reacts by scrambling its own fighter aircraft to intercept these officially labeled "unknown aircraft." These confrontations have occurred quite frequently over the years with occasional tragic result and hold the potential to cause more tragic international incidents in the future. In one of the more famous recent such incidents, in October 1997 the Greek defense minister was on a Greek C-130 flight to Cyprus when he was buzzed by Turkish F-16s. He was also buzzed on the return trip, provoking angry Greek accusations of provocation. Though the lack of a serious military escalation seems to indicate both sides' reluctance to escalate the dispute into a military clash (which can be said for the broader Aegean dispute as well), these confrontations may inadvertently be the spark that could ignite the disagreement into an undesired war and must therefore be stopped through resolution of the conflict.

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<sup>37</sup> In fact, the United States and other states party to ICAO and UNCLOS III also disagree with Greece's position. See Bahcheli, p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> Schofield, Clive, and Peter Hocknell, "Instability in the Eastern Mediterranean, A Cypriot crisis in the making," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, p. 8, March 1998.

<sup>39</sup> The Department of State, Article VIII, Section 3, p. 139.

<sup>40</sup> NATO and the United States concur with Turkey that all parties should indeed follow the ICAO international norms and do not file flight plans for their military aircraft either. From conversation with Tjarck Roessler, thesis advisor, 30 January 2001.

Greece stakes its claims on several justifications. First, it has claimed the 10 mile national airspace for many years, does not wish to give up a right it proclaimed so many years ago, and Turkey only recently objected to the disparity (1975). She claims she needs 10 miles vice 6 because of aircraft speeds. In fact, Greek officials have occasionally suggested that they could remedy the problem by extending both the territorial seas and airspace to 12 miles – Turkey is not amused by these ruses.<sup>41</sup> Second, Greece views Turkish attempts to gain more control of the FIR simply as attempts to gain more control of the Aegean. Third, she says that the FIR boundaries virtually coincide with the geographic boundaries between the two countries, and that if they were moved any further west then Greek aircraft flying eastward to Greek islands would at times be obliged to report to Turkish authorities while in Greek sovereign airspace. This would be contrary to international law and ICAO would never approve such a change. Fourth, Greece says that since Turkey was present at and accepted the ICAO conferences that delineated the FIR boundaries Turkey should not be objecting now. And in addition, control of international airspace in a FIR does not mean sovereignty over that airspace anyway. Greece thus regards Turkish actions such as national airspace violations and the issuance of NOTAM 714 as complete disregard for international law and claims that control of the Aegean FIR is a purely technical job. She therefore sees the Turkish claims, since the proposed FIR boundary roughly corresponds to the proposed continental shelf boundary, as a purely political attempt to link the two issues and gain more control of the Aegean for her benefit.

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<sup>41</sup> Bahcheli, p. 144.

Turkey, on the other hand, sees the Greek claim of 10 miles of airspace sovereignty as evidence of Greek attempts to control the Aegean airspace and claims that it should correspond to the territorial sea limit of 6 miles. She says that she has indeed never officially approved or even silently accepted Greece's 10-mile airspace claim; she has silently objected since 1931 and officially challenged it only recently (1975) because prior to 1975 Greece had not given proper official notification of the 10-mile limit.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Turkey has repeatedly accused Greek officials of abusing the purely technical FIR responsibilities to gain de facto control of the Aegean. She alleges that Greece has created new air corridors without consulting Ankara (as is required by ICAO rules), has created control zones around certain islands, and has deliberately interfered with Turkish military exercises by refusing to issue the appropriate Turkish NOTAMs or by unilaterally amending them.<sup>43</sup> Though there is considerable evidence of these Greek actions, Greece claims that she has never used her FIR responsibilities for any purpose other than safety and facilitation of air traffic. Also, Turkey feels that Greece constantly regards the international airspace over which she has FIR control as her own national airspace and that Greece regards the Athens FIR as a defense perimeter. The defense perimeter would account for vehement Greek insistence that all military air operations are reported to the Athens FIR. Turkey insists that under international law military aircraft flying in international airspace are under no obligation to submit flight plans,<sup>44</sup> and that any such requirement would hinder Turkish military exercises and the defense of her state. Finally, she feels that the FIR boundary is too close to her land border and for

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>44</sup> *Turkish-Greek Relations, Aegean Problems*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adea/default.htm> [12 September 2000].



security purposes desires a system giving balanced control as well as sufficient mutual early warning of military operations.<sup>45</sup>

#### **D. DEMILITARIZATION/MILITARIZATION OF EASTERN AEGEAN ISLANDS**

Greece and Turkey also disagree over the demilitarization/militarization of certain eastern Aegean islands, though this dispute seems to take a backseat to the other issues discussed above. Prior to 1923, Turkey was concerned about the possible use of the islands of the eastern Aegean as a Greek starting spot for attacks on Turkey, and therefore had asked for their demilitarization. The Treaty of Lausanne and Treaty of Montreux, as well as the Treaty of Paris and several other smaller treaties, established not only the sovereignty but also the demilitarized status of these islands. The Treaty of Lausanne demilitarized most of the Greek and Turkish islands and coastal areas with the exception of police forces, gendarmerie, etc. The Treaty of Montreux, though, partially revised the Treaty of Lausanne by allowing the partial remilitarization of certain islands near the Dardanelles. The definition of just what are appropriate police forces and gendarmerie and just what remilitarization was permitted by the Treaty of Montreux are at the core of the demilitarization dispute. Because the countries were in a period of *détente* in the middle of the twentieth century, no questions were raised regarding this status quo; it was conducive to peace. But beginning in the 1960's with the rising tensions over Cyprus and especially in 1974 after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus this question re-emerged as one of great importance to both countries.

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<sup>45</sup> Wilson, p. 24.

Legally, the issue can be divided into three different groups:

a) *Lemnos and Samothrace* – the Treaty of Lausanne demilitarized these Greek islands due to their proximity to the Turkish straits (Dardanelles). Turkey claims that the Treaty of Montreux of 1936 confirmed this status and that it holds to this day. Greece claims that the Treaty of Montreux canceled the demilitarized status of these islands. The statement of the Turkish Foreign Minister at the time complicates Turkey's position: "The provisions concerning the islands of Lemnos and Samothrace which belong to our friend and neighbour, Greece, and which had been demilitarized by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, are abolished also by the Treaty of Montreux and we are particularly pleased about this...."<sup>46</sup> Turkey responds that it was simply a statement of goodwill and that it does not change the provisions that the Treaty of Montreux sets forth.

b) *Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Ikaria* – the Treaty of Lausanne also demilitarized these Greek islands but with provisions that they could station military forces there that were locally recruited as well as a force of police and gendarmerie proportionate to the force of police and gendarmerie throughout the rest of Greece. No bases or fortifications were to be established, though. Turkey objects to the high number of military and police forces that Greece has placed on these islands.

c) *The Dodecanese Islands* – the Treaty of Paris ordered these Greek islands demilitarized but left a provision for the maintenance of internal security forces.

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<sup>46</sup> Bahcheli, p. 148.

Again, Turkey objects to the high number of internal security forces that Greece has placed on these islands.<sup>47</sup>

Following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and several threatening and aggressive statements by Turkish officials, Greece felt for self-defense reasons that it needed to remilitarize these islands. She claims that all militarization that has taken place is in accordance with the treaties named above and that United Nations (UN) Charter Article 51 allows for the inherent right to self-defense. She feels that her militarization was further justified by Turkey's subsequent establishment in 1975 of the "Army of the Aegean" (Turkey's 4<sup>th</sup> Army) on the Anatolian coast, which she sees as offensive and a real threat to Greek sovereignty and security. This Army is equipped with the largest non-oceangoing landing force in the world and is not part of NATO<sup>48</sup>, proving to Greek eyes the offensive nature of Turkey's 4<sup>th</sup> Army. Greece in fact reinforced her island forces only after the establishment of Turkey's 4<sup>th</sup> Army, furthering her claim that these island forces are defensive. Greece says that Turkish objections are out of a fear of Greek aggressiveness and confirms that all militarization is proportional, for local defense only, and helps maintain security and the balance of power in the region. Finally, Greece claims that Turkey was not a signatory of the Treaty of Paris affecting the Dodecanese islands and therefore has no legal grounds to challenge Greece's actions in the Dodecaneses.

Turkey objects to the Greek remilitarization of these eastern Aegean islands. She objects to the great numbers of armed forces on Lemnos and Samothrace, to a greater number of gendarmerie than is necessary on Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Ikaria, to an

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<sup>47</sup> Wilson, p. 16.

abuse of the right to place limited forces on the Dodecaneses, to the military character that several airports had taken, and to the naval installations/naval vessels throughout the islands. For Turkey the issue is not just Greek disregard for the treaties: due to their close proximity to the Turkish coastline, she sees these forces as a threat for quick invasion or for air strikes against the Turkish mainland. She therefore views the 4<sup>th</sup> Army as defensive<sup>49</sup> and also stands by Article 51 of the UN Charter. Turkey holds that there is a direct link in the aforementioned treaties between Greek ownership of the islands and their demilitarized status (an argument that Greece does not agree with), that this should still hold true, and that Greece is not upholding its international obligations. In sum, Turkey feels that Greece's illegal militarization of the islands of the eastern Aegean upsets the "status quo" established by the Lausanne Treaty and therefore presses for the removal/reduction of Greek forces in these areas.

#### **E. DISPUTED ISLANDS, ISLETS, AND ROCKS**

The final major issue on which Greece and Turkey disagree (though like demilitarization it seems to take a backseat to the first three more major issues) is the status of several disputed islands, islets, and rocks. While it seems that such minor pieces of land would not be of major concern, the issue has explosive potential as witnessed in the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis. The tiny (only several acres big) Imia/Kardak rocks (Imia in the Greek language and Kardak in Turkish) are located approximately 3.8 miles off the Anatolian coast of Turkey (near the city of Bodrum) and 5.5 miles from the Greek island of Kalimnos. [See Figures 5 and 6.] They support practically no life or economic possibility, are inhabited only by several happy seagulls and grazing goats, and were

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<sup>48</sup> Schofield and Hocknell, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> Bahcheli, p. 148.

considered no more than navigation hazards until the incident. The strait in which they are located is very narrow, indicating that their possession would have minimal impact on anything of importance (like fishing, boundary delimitation, or oil).<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, there are also many other islets/rocks throughout the Aegean the sovereignty of which are under dispute. Like Imia/Kardak, to a non-Greek or -Turk these “gray areas” seemingly



Figure 5. Imia/Kardak region. From Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/moremaps/imia2hol.jpg>.

<sup>50</sup> Schofield and Hocknell, p. 9.

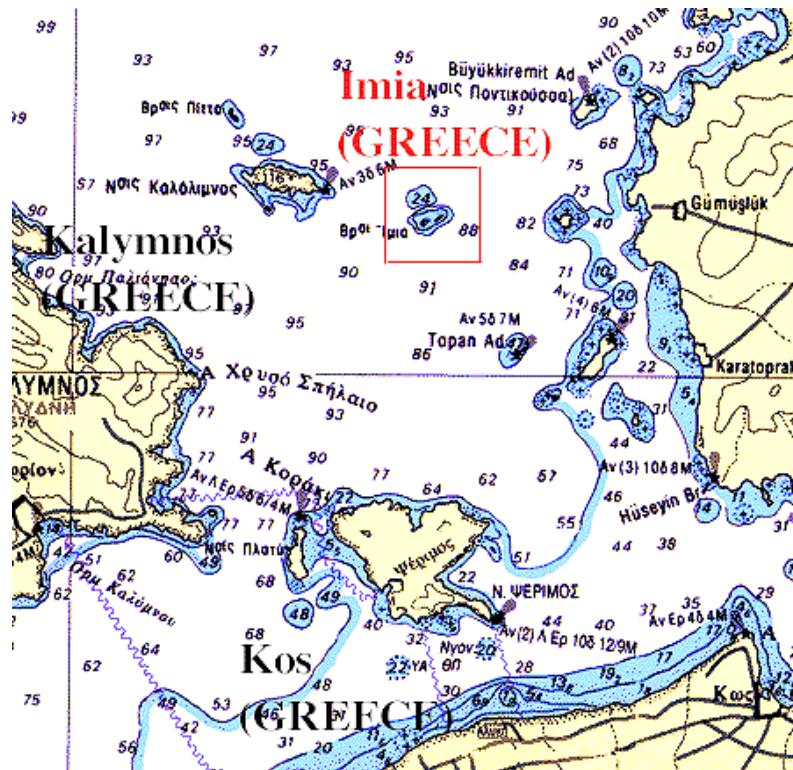


Figure 6. Imia/Kardak. From Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/imiamap.htm>.

hold little significance, but to the Greeks and Turks they are much more important and tie in to the larger overall Aegean dispute.

By the pure coincidence of a freighter running aground this issue assumed a large place in the broader Aegean conflict between the countries. On December 25, 1995 the Turkish freighter “Figen Akat” ran aground on these small rocks. In the following weeks there was no crisis, but when Greek authorities offered to commence salvage operations on January 20, 1996 the Turkish captain refused help from the Greek tug because he claimed he was on Turkish territory.<sup>51</sup> When Greek newspapers such as “GAMMA” got word of the story, they raised nationalistic questions of sovereignty over the rocks. Athens rejected Turkish claims of sovereignty, and Ankara rejected Greek claims. The

mayor of Kalimnos raised the Greek flag on the rocks. Turkish journalists responded by replacing the Greek flag with the Turkish flag the following day. [See Figure 7.] When Greek commandos then landed on the rocks and unfurled the Greek flag again, Turkey had plans to overrun the Greeks there.<sup>52</sup> Both countries followed over the ensuing weeks by building up their military on, over, and in the waters in the vicinity of the rocks. Among the forces Turkey sent were three frigates, three attack craft, and a destroyer; among the forces Greece sent were two frigates, a destroyer, three fast attack craft, and Mirage fighters. (Even forces on both sides of the Cyprus dividing line were put on alert.)<sup>53</sup> Opposing armed forces were stationed only a few hundred yards apart. The



Figure 7. Greek and Turkish press fueling flag race on Imia/Kardak in 1996. From Schofield and Hocknell in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, <http://fore.thomson.com/janesdata/mags/jir/jir98/images/p2362.jpg>.

<sup>51</sup> "Isles Torn by Geography and Politics," p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Engelberg, Stephen, "U.S. Brokers Peace Accord in the Aegean," *The New York Times*, p. 6, 31 January 1996.

<sup>53</sup> "Alliance Partners on the Rocks, but Aegean Tragedy Averted," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, No. 6, Vol. 25, p. 17, 7 February 1996.

press published stories with nationalistic overtones, further escalating the issue.<sup>54</sup> Even the European Parliament, much to the dismay of Turkey, passed a vote on 15 February 1996 “on the provocative actions and contestation of sovereign rights by Turkey against a Member State of the [European] Union.”<sup>55</sup> This vote even further enflamed the issue.

The dangerous military situation was eventually diffused via intense pressure from high U.S diplomats (including President Bill Clinton) to both sides – a compromise was reached where both sides withdrew their forces and flags and returned to the “status quo,” but much to the dissatisfaction of nationalists in both countries, especially Greece.<sup>56</sup> Even though this military conflict has been resolved, though, both countries still claim ownership of Imia/Kardak.

It is interesting to note the reactions of each country to the compromise and subsequent withdrawal of the military in the 1996 Imia/Kardak conflict. Greece’s government viewed the withdrawal as a victory. Prime Minister Constantine Simitis said, “‘Turkey failed in its effort to force Greece to negotiate the legal status of the islets.... The islet of Imia is and will remain Greek....’”<sup>57</sup> But he received harsh criticism, despite his strong stance, from domestic media, political opponents, and the general public because Greek sovereignty was not defended.

‘You have agreed to lower the Greek flag on Imia, to pull back Greek armed forces from Greek territory and you have tolerated the landing’ of Turkish forces on a Greek island. Turkey ‘stayed as long as it wished on this island and left when they themselves judged it necessary,’

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<sup>54</sup> *Background Note on Aegean Dispute*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adeb/default.htm> [12 September 2000].

<sup>55</sup> *European Parliament vote*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm> [29 October 2000].

<sup>56</sup> Schofield and Hocknell, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> “Charges Fly As the Greeks and Turks Avert a War,” *The New York Times*, p. 3, 1 February 1996.



[Conservative opposition leader Miltiades] Evert said, to thunderous applause from his party's MPs. 'The Greek government failed to understand the trap laid by Ankara, which wanted to challenge the legal status of the Aegean Sea,' he said. Simitis hit back, saying: 'We have succeeded in avoiding a conflict between Greek and Turkish forces ... and reduced tension with no negotiation with Turkey over the legal status of the Greek islets. We were ready to go to war and we would have done so if it had been necessary. We did not want to fall into the Turkish trap of forcing negotiation over the status of our Aegean islands. ... After five, six or seven days of war, we would have been forced to sit down at the negotiating table, which was what the Turks wanted. Greek sovereignty is not negotiable. Nothing has changed about the status of Imia.'<sup>58</sup>

Evert responded by saying, "'The removal of Greek troops and the lowering of the Greek flag constitute an act of treason.'"<sup>59</sup> And an editorial in the *Simerini*, a Greek Cypriot paper, said, "It is useful for the American pimps, supporters, and financiers of the ... repulsive Turkish state to know our feelings after the postponement of this war: We feel humiliated, we feel ashamed, and we feel defeated again."<sup>60</sup>

The Turkish government also viewed the compromise and subsequent withdrawal of the military as a victory. She viewed it as a victory because their planned commando action was the event that forced Greece off the rocks, because Greece did not defend her supposed sovereignty, and because Turkish claims to the rocks were still very much justified. "...The Government of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller characterized the outcome of the incident as a triumph. 'We expressed our decisiveness very clearly,' she said. 'We said 'this flag will come down, these soldiers will go. There is no other solution,' and we got our result.'"<sup>61</sup> But nevertheless, some nationalistic journalists, politicians, and

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<sup>58</sup> "Israel Blocks Entry to Gaza of PLO police from Libya," *Agence France Presse*, 31 January 1996.

<sup>59</sup> Pope, Hugh, "US Cools Aegean Islands Clash," *The Independent (London)*, p. 9, 1 February 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Theodoulou, Mike, "Saving Greece and Turkey From War Keeps US Busy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. 7, 8 February 1996.

<sup>61</sup> "Charges Fly As the Greeks and Turks Avert a War," p. 3.

commoners were upset that their government had given in and looked at the compromise and withdrawal as a national defeat.

This conflict has since been taken to other areas, for example the island of Gavdos. Turkey opposed its inclusion in the 1996 NATO exercise DYNAMIC MIX “due to its disputed status of property.”<sup>62</sup> Greece was flabbergasted at the allegation, but NATO and Greece were forced to deal with it. The dispute over islands, islets, and rocks (as well as the other issues in the broader Greek/Turkish conflict) thus has the potential to disrupt day-to-day operations and will undoubtedly fester along with the rest of the issues.

The detailed justifications of each side regarding how the many various treaties prove the sovereignty of these gray areas are beyond the scope of this thesis. In short, though, Greece feels that the sovereignty of all of the “gray islands” is not in question; the treaties discussed earlier in this thesis are very clear as to which country owns what. They are specific, name individual islands, and formalize that Greece owns the majority of the islands in the Aegean. She objects to the Turkish view that any small islet/rock not specifically named in a treaty is automatically Turkish. In fact, Greece points out that Turkey has accepted the current status for over 70 years and is now making direct claims on Greek sovereign territory. She says that this incident was especially threatening because it was the first time since World War II that one of the countries (Turkey in this

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<sup>62</sup> *Turkey's most recent aggression against Greece: the Greek island of Gavdos.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/gavdos.htm> [18 September 2000].

case) has asked to change the borders and because for the first time in the Aegean dispute Turkey has landed troops on soil claimed by the Greeks.<sup>63</sup>

Turkey, on the other hand, claims that numerous islands, islets, and rocks were not specifically ceded to Greece by formal legal treaty and, because of their Turkish ownership prior to 1923, are therefore still Turkish and have been throughout the twentieth century. She feels that Greece's sudden desire for possession of these gray areas further indicates Greece's aggressive expansionistic intentions. Turkey feels that this issue is directly related to the disputes over territorial waters, continental shelf, and airspace in that the more land over which Greece has sovereignty, the more territorial waters, continental shelf, and airspace she could potentially claim. She even feels that it is related to demilitarization of the islands of the eastern Aegean and delimitation of maritime boundaries between the countries.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Turkey made her claims on Imia/Kardak so strongly due to the proximity of the rocks to the Turkish mainland (3.8 miles); the more Greece owns near Turkey's coastline, the more easily Greece could act militarily against her. Likewise, the more Greece owns near Turkey's coastline, the more difficult it would be for Turkey to economically exploit the Aegean.

While it would appear that this is a trivial matter over which to argue, several deeper (and more understandable) reasons emerge for the staunch stance taken by both Turkey and Greece. First of all, at the time of the incident both governments were weak and in a state of transition/strife; they consequently were not able to keep the situation under control as well as they should have. “All of this is obviously a function of

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<sup>63</sup> “Simitis Calls for ICJ resolution of Greece-Turkey Dispute,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 8 April 1996.

<sup>64</sup> *Turkish-Greek Relations, Aegean Problems*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adea/default.htm> [12 September 2000].

absentee civilian leaders,’ said one senior official. ‘You have a classic situation in which the militar[ies are] disproportionately influential, and their inherent hostility toward each other just exploded.’”<sup>65</sup>

Second, ownership of Imia/Kardak could have great impact on the other issues under dispute in the Aegean. The owner could conceivably extend the territorial waters around Imia/Kardak to 6 or even 12 nm, restricting the strait in which it is located and bringing these international waters under national control. This could then impact the claims of ownership of the continental shelf (and any minerals) under the territorial waters and the airspace over them. Since the rocks are in such close proximity to the Turkish mainland, a potentially explosive situation could be created.

Additionally, the more of the Aegean over which each country has sovereignty, the better her economy will be. There would be more potential shipping that each could control and more potential oil, gas, and mineral reserves that each could reap. More sovereignty over the Aegean means more fishing, and could also boost potential money from recreation and tourism.

The final root cause of this dispute is the same root cause of each of the greater Aegean disputes: ownership of Imia/Kardak and its ties to the continental shelf and territorial waters could have great impact on each country’s sense of national prestige, honor, and inherent mistrust of the other side. Ownership of the rocks themselves would probably not yield much economically, but symbolically they would mean more sovereignty over the Aegean. And the more sovereignty over the Aegean, the more national prestige and honor for each country and the greater that each country can

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<sup>65</sup> Engelberg, p. 6, and “Aegean Ballet,” The Jerusalem Post, p. 6, 8 February 1996.

respond to their seemingly innate nationalism and mistrust of the other side. This nationalism and mistrust of the other side, as will be discussed in Chapter V, are indeed the root cause of the entire Aegean dispute. They played a huge role in the Imia/Kardak dispute and continue, as will be discussed, to be large factors in the broader Aegean dispute.

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### **III. THE EFFECT OF THE DISPUTE ON NATO**

The dispute between Greece and Turkey over the Aegean Sea has not only affected these two countries but has also directly impacted NATO. An issue of special concern since the 1960's but a "political battleground" since the Turkish Cyprus invasion of 1974, NATO's common defense planning and even common operations and exercises have been hampered, constrained, confused, and sometimes even halted altogether because of this ongoing dispute. All of the quarrels described in Chapter II, but especially the disputes over airspace, territorial waters, ownership of islands, and demilitarization, have been a worrisome irritation to NATO. Even though bilateral and NATO relations have tremendously improved since the successful accomplishment of the new NATO Command Structure – including the Aegean subregion's organization - in 1999, exercises and day-to-day operations are still causing new conflicts and irritations or being hampered, further impressing the need for a resolution to the Aegean dispute soon in the future.

#### **A. NATO STARTS TO FEEL THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT**

Though the brunt of the impact of the Greek/Turkish dispute that is relevant for this thesis has been felt since 1974, the ongoing tensions between the countries have caused NATO problems since Greece and Turkey's joining the alliance. Quarreling over Cyprus since its independence in 1960, for example, was one of the situations that was causing rifts in the alliance and that was triggering more calls for its dismantling.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Kaplan, Lawrence S., NATO and the United States, Updated Edition: The Enduring Alliance, p. 82, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

Though the opportunity to ally with Greece and Turkey and defend the southeastern flank was advantageous, the lengths to which the alliance has had to go to accommodate Greece and Turkey are great. “If the most obvious benefit NATO gained when Greece and Turkey joined the military organization in 1952 was the opportunity to coordinate a forward defense of its southern flank, its most obvious liability since 1974 has been a lack of coordination that is evident in every forum in which the two allies are represented.”<sup>67</sup>

Lack of coordination between Greek and Turkish forces assigned to NATO creates vulnerabilities extending beyond the Aegean that the alliance has sought to disguise rather than eliminate. When NATO was geared exclusively to the containment of the Soviet Union, its military planners did not envisage many tactical situations in wartime in which military forces of the two countries would participate in joint land or maritime operations. The preeminent mission of Greek and Turkish forces was defense of the homeland. In the event of hostilities with the Warsaw Pact, NATO hoped for holding actions in Greek and Turkish Thrace, in the Aegean, and in eastern Turkey that would test Soviet intentions and, in the event of a major Soviet attack, prevent these areas from being overrun before reinforcements arrived from Western Europe and the United States. The coincidence of their national and NATO military missions explains why Greece and Turkey were able to make significant adjustments in their force deployments and defense plans without being directly challenged by NATO’s Defense Planning and Military Committees. Although the most casual scrutiny of Greek and Turkish orders of battle clearly showed that their forces in the Aegean theater were deployed primarily against each other, not the Warsaw Pact, NATO chose to treat them as forces executing a national defense mission consistent with NATO plans and not to raise the more awkward question of what threat they were defending themselves against.<sup>68</sup>

But lack of coordination is by no means the only problem that Greece and Turkey have caused over the years – some others are discussed in the next section. Despite these many problems, though, Greece and Turkey’s memberships in NATO were and are still

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<sup>67</sup> Stearns, p. 69-70.



desired and remain critical to the alliance for many reasons. First, they provide for the defense of the southeastern flank, as critical now as it was during the Cold War. In addition (and more importantly recently), they provide access to the Middle East. Access to Iraq and Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War through Turkey proved invaluable, as did use of Greek airspace and naval facilities in the Aegean. Also, U.S. bases in the two countries provide critical forward staging posts for U.S. personnel and equipment; the best example for this strategic value are the air operations against Iraq which have commenced from bases in southeastern Turkey. Moreover, Turkey has the second largest armed force in NATO.<sup>69</sup> And finally, Turkey serves as Israel's only ally in the region and a check on Syria and Iran.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, even under charged political strategic conditions since the end of the Cold War, Greece and Turkey are still important for NATO. Since they joined the alliance, though, they have caused NATO much damage because of their ongoing disputes. This damage was not only in the form of actual operating and logistical problems, though. Another, and perhaps greater, problem began to be felt in the NATO planning and decision-making bodies. Confidence within the alliance was waning, and the rift between Greece and Turkey caused initiatives, decisions, and even day-to-day operating requirements that needed unanimous consensus to stall. These stalls, combined with the operating problems, were a great impediment to NATO especially over the last quarter of the twentieth century and caused many of the major problems that are discussed below.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 73-74.

<sup>69</sup> Schofield and Hocknell, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> "A Prickly Friend," The Economist, 10 June 2000.

## **B. THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON NATO 1974-1999<sup>71</sup>**

### **1. Greek Withdrawal from NATO's Integrated Military Structure from 1974 to 1980**

The greatest impact of the Greek-Turkish dispute on NATO has been since the fighting in Cyprus in 1974. After the coup in Cyprus, strongly supported but more importantly initiated by the military dictatorship in Greece, the Greek Colonels' regime was overthrown and a new democratic government came in. The new political leaders were so upset with the way the United States had supported the overthrown dictatorship, with the U.S. acceptance of Turkish military actions on Cyprus, and with the Turkish actions on Cyprus themselves, that it withdrew immediately from NATO's integrated military command structure and remained out until 1980.<sup>72</sup> Greek Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis said,

“I had to chose. Either to declare war on Turkey or to leave NATO. Between the two I chose the lesser evil.” That the Greek political leader most identified with a policy of Western alignment should have believed it necessary to choose between continued membership in NATO or war against a fellow member demonstrates how far Greek-Turkish antagonism had been permitted to abort the alliance's military mission in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>73</sup>

Turkey, for her part, was also upset with the United States; when the United States, under great pressure from Congress<sup>74</sup>, placed an embargo on transfers of military equipment to Turkey, effective in February 1975, Turkey responded by suspending U.S.

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<sup>71</sup> Unless noted otherwise, some of the background information – in detail to a certain degree still classified - in Sections B and C of this Chapter comes from a discussion between the thesis advisor and the author at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey on 24 January 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Stearns, p. 125.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Greek and Turkish lobby groups in the United States have always been loud voices that give Congress great pressure. How Congress responds to these lobby groups sometimes further complicates NATO's relationship with Greece and Turkey.

operations at U.S. bases in Turkey.<sup>75</sup> Greece, Turkey, and the United States were thus at odds with each other, and consequently the common alliance, NATO, suffered damage. This damage was in preparedness, in communications, in troop placement, in planning, and in cohesion. Without Greece operating militarily in the alliance and without access to U.S. bases in Turkey, protecting and operating in NATO's southeastern flank was especially challenging. Greece eventually reentered the military command structure of NATO in 1980 (though Turkey vetoed Greece's full reintegration for three years further), but it was still years before most of the problems caused by her withdrawal would be worked out. Indeed, operations are in fact still not completely smooth today.

## **2. Country Chapters**

The Greek-Turkish dispute has caused such a deadlock in NATO's Defense Planning Review that since 1970 each country has vetoed the other's "country chapter," the yearly inventory of forces assigned to NATO which serves as the core for NATO's common defense planning. Turkey and Greece vetoed the other's country chapter because of many disagreements: for example, over placement of troops on Greek islands which should, in the eyes of Turkey, have been demilitarized, and over the unreported numbers of Turkish troops in the TRNC when, in the eyes of Greece, the Turkish 4<sup>th</sup> Army on Turkish soil alone already poses a large threat to the Greek possessions in the Aegean Sea. Both also disagreed with the other's infrastructural spending.<sup>76</sup> With no country chapter, common defense planning over the years was difficult at best.

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<sup>75</sup> Kaplan, p. 125.

<sup>76</sup> Conostas, p. 21.

### **3. Budgetary Problems**

Each country furthermore vetoed the funding to NATO's established (e.g., NATO HQ Izmir, Turkey) and to-be-reestablished (e.g., NATO HQ Larissa, Greece) regional installations and headquarters, thereby starving these establishments of much needed money. In addition, yearly "running budgets" were exceeded. Because each year the new running budget could not be approved, the new running budget automatically reverted to the previous year's. In practical terms, this amounted to regressing to the running budget that had been approved prior to the initial country chapter veto.

Funding to many other secondary budgetary requirements was additionally halted. For example, respective vetoes blocked additional funding to supplemental programs that had an impact on NATO installations. Communications equipment and cryptographic equipment, for example, did not get properly cared for and upgraded, resulting in degradation or even loss of communications between headquarters in Izmir, for instance, and other NATO headquarters. Modernization and use of common equipment throughout NATO was difficult at best.

As an example, squabbling between the two countries in 1987 and 1988 resulted in failure to approve about half of the proposed projects (which require unanimous approval before funds can be dispensed). This squabbling cost Turkey \$252 million and Greece \$144 million, amounts that neither country can individually afford to jeopardize. It also cost NATO in readiness, efficiency, and fortification.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Stearns, p. 69.

#### **4. NATO Exercises**

Many NATO exercises in the Aegean have been either altered or halted altogether due to the Greek-Turkish dispute. In other exercises either Greece or Turkey (or both) has withdrawn from an exercise because of certain objections to the way it was being run, to the islands that were included or not included, to the roles that the other was playing in certain scenarios, etc. Lack of full completion of an exercise as originally designed negatively affects the readiness, cohesiveness, and confidence of the forces and, therefore, of the alliance. Also, exercises in which all the participants do not fully agree with or intend to comply with the plan hold the potential (as in the day-to-day dueling of aircraft in disputed airspace) for deadly accidents. Finally, when an alliance cannot agree on the manner in which to conduct an exercise (much less an actual operation) it makes the alliance look incompetent and less credible to those outside the alliance; "...the spectacle of one NATO ally conducting mock dogfights with another in aircraft supplied by a third does little to strengthen the alliance's credibility and much to emphasize NATO's responsibility to do more than it has to eliminate the risk of hostilities between two of its members."<sup>78</sup> Similar embarrassments occur on the surface of the Aegean, with Turkish naval vessels shadowing their Greek counterparts and vice-versa.

The exercises that have been affected by the dispute are too numerous to list and discuss in this thesis. One typical example, though, is worth looking at as typical of all the others. In the 1983 exercise APEX EXPRESS the Greek island of Limnos was excluded from the exercise area in order to appease Turkey because of her objection to Limnos's militarized status. Limnos was, though, included in the free play part of the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

exercise (when Greek and Turkish forces were not bound by the scenario) so that Greece was appeased by assuming that it was indeed part of the exercise. The Greek press reported (incorrectly) that because it was included in the exercise NATO supported Greece's right to militarize Limnos. Turkey publicly objected, and Greece subsequently withdrew.<sup>79</sup>

Greece also boycotted the annual DISPLAY DETERMINATION exercise in the same year with the same objections, and again in 1988 because of objections to NATO infrastructural spending in the other.<sup>80</sup> In other exercises communiqués and plans were skewed or altered in order to placate one or the other country. These are examples of the kinds of little squabbles that have plagued NATO exercises over the past two decades.

## **5. New Command Structure**

A last NATO prerogative that has been affected by the Greek-Turkish dispute was the implementation of the new NATO command structure. In 1992 the NATO Command Structure document MC-294 was agreed upon by the NATO Military Committee but not eventually endorsed by the North Atlantic Council (NAC). In NATO's top ranking political decision-making body, the necessary unanimous approval could not be reached: both Greece and Turkey's politicians disapproved of the regional command structure with regard to the above mentioned central issues of the status of militarization, numbers and deployment of forces, etc. Thus MC-294 was relegated to "working document" and in effect only some of the improvements were implemented.

In total, including the "open issue" of the final endorsement of the command structure, thirteen critical projects and working programs of MC-294 were under

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

blockade. Though a completely new Command Structure was finally approved in 1999, the Greek-Turkish dispute caused NATO over seven years of not receiving the benefits and improvements that MC-294 would have brought earlier.

To summarize, since 1974 the Greek-Turkish dispute has thus been extremely detrimental not only to the operational capabilities of the alliance but also to its cohesion. The alliance was further damaged when Greece's Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou widened the opening rift in NATO by asking the other NATO members, in 1981,

to state formally that NATO guarantees under Article 5 applied to threats from within the alliance as well as from outside it. Denials by the Turks that they were threatening Greece and complaints from other members that, under the circumstances, passage of a resolution like the one proposed by Papandreou would constitute a reproach Turkey did not merit, resulted in the defeat of the Greek initiative. Most of the other members believed that such a pledge would add nothing to the treaty which, in any event, under Article 1, affirmed the commitment of the parties "to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means...." Papandreou, however, refused to approve the text of a final communiqué that did not include the Greek wording. Since the communiqué required unanimous approval, the result of the impasse was that, for the first time in NATO history, no communiqué of defense ministers was issued. Greece had dramatized its position on the territorial issue but at the price of isolating itself further in the NATO council and reinforcing the determinations of the NATO secretariat to steer clear of Greek-Turkish problems.<sup>81 82</sup>

All of these effects of the Greek-Turkish dispute on NATO caused the alliance to not operate as well it could have. Due to the problems discussed above its operational

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<sup>80</sup> Conostas, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Stearns, p. 100-101.

<sup>82</sup> Probably as a result of this case, the Western European Union (WEU) of today attached a similar protocol to the article of Greek accession declaring that the Article 5 defense guarantee would not apply to war between Greece and another NATO member (Turkey). See "EUROPE, Earthquake heals Aegean rift," Jane's Intelligence Review, No. 12, Vol. 11, 1 December 1999.

readiness and efficiency, especially in the southeastern sector, were far less than they should have been. Many of these problems have been corrected with the approval of the 1999 new command structure, yet as discussed below even since the Washington Summit some problems are still outstanding.

### **C. THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON NATO 1999-PRESENT**

As mentioned above, the completely new NATO military command structure was finally approved by the NAC in 1999.<sup>83</sup> This new command structure ridded the alliance of most of the problems discussed above. Since then the alliance has as a result been operating at better levels of efficiency and readiness.

The agreement was only reached, though, after many compromises were made, especially by Greece and Turkey. These two countries, while agreeing on the surface with the changes, still cling to the claims, deep-rooted beliefs, and suspicions of the other that have been with them especially since 1974. Consequently, while NATO is better off than it was before the restructuring, the compromises do nothing more than temporarily conceal the two countries' true desires, forcing NATO to continue to operate less effectively than it should.

The most recent example is NATO's exercise DESTINED GLORY 2000, the first large-scale NATO exercise since the establishment of the new command structure. "Conducted in Greece and Turkey and in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas, its two-fold purpose was to demonstrate NATO's capability to provide a flexible response to potential crises and to improve NATO's capability to carry out combined (ie: [sic] multinational) and joint (ie: [sic] land, air, maritime) operations of an expeditionary



nature.”<sup>84</sup> Many parts of the exercise were a resounding success, but in the end Greece still withdrew and Turkey still openly complained about Greece’s operations. The dispute centered on whether Greek fighters could fly over Lemnos and Ikaria, which (as discussed in Chapter II) Turkey feels should be demilitarized. When Greek planes did fly over them, Turkish fighters tailed them. After this, and to make matters worse, anti-aircraft missiles locked on to Turkish planes that flew close to the Greek-controlled part of Cyprus.<sup>85</sup> Even though both countries were reticent in their criticism of the other, these events show that in spite of the improvements of the new command structure, the old problems in the southeastern sector continue.

Another indicator that the new command structure has not solved all of NATO’s problems in the Aegean is the amount of money that both Greece and Turkey spend on their national defense. “Defense resources are finite, and have in fact been shrinking in most NATO countries (with the exceptions of Greece and Turkey) since the mid-1980’s.”<sup>86</sup> Between 1991 and 1994, Greece and Turkey together imported three times as many tanks as the British army could field in the event of war.<sup>87</sup> This trend continues today; in 1998, Greece’s defense spending as a percentage of the continent’s combined gross domestic product (GDP) was 4.8 percent and Turkey’s was 4.4 percent. The average for a European NATO member was 2.2 percent.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, Greece and

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<sup>83</sup> More detailed information on the new NATO military command structure can be found in “NATO’s New Military Command Structure,” *NATO Review*, p. 10, No. 1, Vol. 46, Spring 1998.

<sup>84</sup> “AFSOUTH News Release: Exercise Destined Glory ends,” AFSOUTH News Release Number 00-29, 25 October 2000. Exercise home page: [www.afsouth.nato.int/Exercises/destinedglory00.htm](http://www.afsouth.nato.int/Exercises/destinedglory00.htm).

<sup>85</sup> “Aegean rumpus,” *The Economist*, 28 October 2000.

<sup>86</sup> Yost, David S., *NATO Transformed*, p. 260, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998.

<sup>87</sup> Theodoulou, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Valasek, Tomas, “European Defense: Slumbering No More?” *The Center for Defense Information Weekly Defense Monitor*, Vol. 3, Issue 19, 14 May 1999. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.cdi.org/weekly/1999/issue19.html#1> [4 February 2001].

Turkey were the only European countries over the last two to three years to significantly increase the percentage of their national GDP that they spent on defense.<sup>89</sup> These figures appear to indicate that Greece and Turkey are basically arming to fight one another. If indeed this is the case, then NATO will continue to be negatively affected by the conflict well into the immediate future.

In sum, while the new command structure has resolved many of the issues that were stalemated over the last two and a half decades by the Greek-Turkish dispute it certainly has not solved all of NATO's problems. The impact of the dispute has been felt for the past 26 years and continues to be felt today. At its best it confounds, confuses, and hinders NATO operations; at its worst, in the event of actual hostilities between the two allies, it could break up or split the alliance.

To make matters worse, neither Greece nor Turkey believes that NATO is truly impartial; both believe that NATO favors the other. Greece, on the one hand, believes that because of Turkey's strategic importance (bases, numbers of personnel, access to the Middle East and Russia, etc.) NATO is partial to Turkey. Turkey, on the other hand, believes that NATO more supports Greece because of Greece's cultural and historical ties to Europe and the United States. Both, therefore, believe that NATO undervalues their membership, a situation that is not good for alliance cohesion.<sup>90</sup>

Even though the Cold War is over, the importance of the alliance is greater than ever. During the Cold War, bipolarity had three mainstays. First, the enormous nuclear

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<sup>89</sup> *Burdensharing in Graphs and Numbers*. The Center for Defense Information. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.cdi.org/issues/Europe/burdensharing.html> [4 February 2001].

and conventional force potentials assured both powers of mutually assured destruction (MAD), which essentially made war out of the question. Second, bipolarity spelled control; because of MAD, both the United States and the Soviet Union controlled any unruly allies so that the superpowers would not be pulled in to a war. Third, bipolarity made for stability within blocs and nations; dependent on the superpower for their security, the less-powerful allies took care not to alienate her.<sup>91</sup> With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, these mainstays of bipolarity no longer apply. In today's multipolar (or unipolar) world there is not one single threat - there are many threats coming from unknown directions; new security systems are still being designed and tested; the more frequent occurrence of non-Article 5 situations has confused the role of the alliance; and the lack of one clear aggressor has perhaps decreased NATO's readiness (could it even intervene immediately and decisively in the event of war between Greece and Turkey?<sup>92</sup>). These changes necessitate a strong and prepared NATO in the present day and demonstrate the importance it will play into the future.

NATO's trials and tribulations with the Greek-Turkish dispute over the last 26 years and the alliance's continued importance in today's world are one more reason for the dispute's immediate resolution. Many attempts at resolution have been made, with few successes. As discussed in the next chapter, though, this last year has been a time of great rapprochement for the two countries. Perhaps now is the time, for Greece and Turkey's sake as well as NATO's, for one giant push toward resolution.

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<sup>90</sup> Stearns, p. 79.

<sup>91</sup> Joffe, Josef, "Germany: Society and Democracy after the Fall of the Wall," p. 26-27, in Tiersky, Ronald, ed., Europe Today, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

<sup>92</sup> Wilkinson, p. 11.

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#### **IV. ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION**

Since the initial confrontations in the early 1970's in the Aegean and on Cyprus, many attempts at finding a resolution have been attempted. These attempts, though, have been severely limited and, for the most part, unsuccessful. Not only do Greece and Turkey disagree on many issues in the Aegean Sea, they also disagree on the manner in which these issues should be resolved. Thus, despite recent rapprochement between the countries and the recent beginning of accession negotiations of Cyprus into the European Union (EU) (which could help to "smooth" the way ahead), a resolution is far from being achieved.

##### **A. PREFERRED METHOD OF SETTLEMENT**

Greece claims that a legal settlement, such as a ruling of the International Court of Justice, is the proper way to come to a solution. She does not want political negotiations as the single way to decide the outcome; she wants international law to be followed in a decision handed down by a ruling party. Greece prefers a legal settlement because her claims are based mostly on legally existing documents and treaties and feels that politically she would gain the most from such a legal settlement. She would also most likely have to give greater concessions in bilateral negotiations than in a purely legal decision. Furthermore, she is afraid that negotiations would never be able to accomplish the task of bringing both sides into agreement on all the issues. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a decision handed down by an outside arbiter, such as the International Court of Justice, would be more acceptable to Greek public opinion than a negotiated

decision involving Greek concessions to Turkey.<sup>93</sup> This last reason largely is a result of national pride, the main obstacle (in both countries) to reaching a solution – a topic that will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Contrary to Greece, Turkey prefers a negotiated settlement achieved out of dialogue. Turkey prefers a negotiated settlement because she is afraid that a decision by an outside legal party (such as the ICJ) would not fully appreciate Turkish interests. Another large factor is that legally the facts support more Greek claims than Turkish claims and do not take into consideration the special and political circumstances of the situation.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, Turkey is afraid of a bias against her by an outside party and is sure that more favorable terms can be obtained through trade-offs and negotiations. Finally, and most importantly once again, the Turkish public would more rapidly accept a negotiated settlement due to the greater achievement of its objectives.

## **B. PAST INITIATIVES**

Following more Turkish (and Greek) exploration in the Greek-claimed continental shelf area after the initial expeditions by the *Candarli* in 1973, Greece filed objections with the UN Security Council on the grounds that Turkey's repeated violations of Greek sovereign rights in the Aegean threatened international peace and security. Greece also instituted proceedings against Turkey in the International Court of Justice seeking interim measures of protection and seeking to determine the continental shelf issue. Neither establishment was able to provide much help. The UN Security Council responded with Resolution 395, adopted on 25 August 1976, which called upon the two

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<sup>93</sup> Wilson, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> Some recent decisions by the ICJ and other tribunals on various other continental shelf cases around the world, though, show that the special circumstances of a case are indeed many times considered in the decision. See Chapter II, footnote 24.

countries “to do everything in their power to reduce present tension in the area so that the negotiating process may be facilitated.” It also called on them “to resume direct negotiations over their differences and appealed them to do everything within their power to ensure that these [negotiations] result in mutually acceptable solutions.” Finally, it “invited them in this respect to continue to take into account the contribution that appropriate judicial means, in particular the International Court of Justice, were qualified to make to the settlement of any remaining legal differences which they might identify in connection with their present dispute.”<sup>95</sup>

The ICJ, despite this acknowledgement, ruled on 11 September 1976 and again on 19 December 1978 that it could not provide interim measures of protection for Greece, did not have jurisdiction over the case, and called on the parties to settle the dispute through negotiations. Both rulings basically turned the dispute back to Greece and Turkey and were deliberately vague as to allow both parties to support them. Thus, though these rulings diffused the immediate tensions over the continental shelf, the first attempts at outside arbitration and/or mediation to reach a permanent solution failed.

In the meantime, in 1976 the countries were at least able to come together and sign the Berne Declaration. This Declaration established a code of behavior to govern future negotiations on the continental shelf, with a view to preventing future crises and reaching an agreement based on mutual consent.<sup>96</sup> Despite some questionable actions by both countries over the years, the Berne Declaration is still a valid framework today.

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<sup>95</sup> Wilson., p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> The Berne Declaration can be viewed in Wilson, p. 30.

A late summit meeting in March 1978 in Montreux between the two prime ministers (Constantine Karamanlis of Greece and Bulent Ecevit of Turkey) led to little other than furthering a climate of mutual confidence. It did, though, lead to regular (if not inconclusive) meetings between the secretaries-general of the two foreign ministries.<sup>97</sup>

When Turkey rescinded NOTAM 714 in 1980 and normal civil aviation was restored in the Aegean, relations temporarily improved. Turkey followed this by another gesture of goodwill, a withdrawal of the insistence “that the reincorporation of Greece into the military command structure of the NATO alliance, from which she had withdrawn in 1974 in the wake of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, should be dependent on the negotiation of new operational control responsibilities in the Aegean region for the armed forces of the two countries.”<sup>98</sup> Relations were up and down for the next few years; several meetings reached agreements assuring no provocative actions, yet minor incidents and disagreements did occasionally cause tensions to flare (for example, the unilateral Turkish recognition of an independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Greek adoption of a new defense doctrine naming its primary threat as not coming from the Warsaw Pact but from Turkey).

Few other major developments occurred until 1987, when a dispute over potential oil reserves in the continental shelf just outside Greek territorial waters off the island of Samothrace almost led to war. Turkey had granted further licenses to the Turkish State Petroleum Company, and Greece had proposed nationalizing a foreign-owned oil consortium that had been exploiting oil in the Aegean. The Turkish vessel *Sismik-I* (the

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<sup>97</sup> Conostas, p. 17.



same ship which was involved in the 1976 incident), escorted by Turkish warships, even set out to conduct research and oil exploration.<sup>99</sup> Greece held NATO responsible for the crisis and, in a calculated snub, briefed ambassadors of Warsaw Pact countries in Athens before their NATO counterparts.<sup>100</sup> Both countries eventually withdrew from their provocative actions, and meetings between Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers in January 1988 at Davos, Switzerland, diffused the conflict further. More meetings were held in March of that year, and in June the Prime Ministers met in Greece (the first time a Turkish Prime Minister had visited Greece in thirty-five years). Committees were even formed to facilitate the discussions and the development of closer relations. The two prime ministers agreed to a more peaceful climate, to the establishment of a hotline between the two countries, to meet at least once a year, and to visit each other's countries. They also called for the intensification of contacts at all levels and for greater emphasis on mutual tourism and cultural exchange.<sup>101</sup> Meetings such as these continued through 1990. "Davos became a symbolic term for a process in which the dispute between the Turks and the Greeks had, for the first time, been taken up over an extended period."<sup>102</sup> This atmosphere of cooperation and mutual trust became known as the "Spirit of Davos" and is now the attitude that is desired (and needed) by both sides if an agreement is to be garnered.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 17-18.

<sup>99</sup> *Unilateral Turkish Claims in the Aegean*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/aegeen.htm> [18 September 2000].

<sup>100</sup> Constanas, p. 20.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> *Selected Books: Turks & Greeks, Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz; Davos and Beyond*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupe/eg/eg06/15.htm> [18 September 2000].

The Davos process broke down, though, in 1990. It can be studied as a typical example of all of the attempts at resolution between Turkey and Greece since 1973 (all other attempts at resolution over the years broke down in similar fashions). Initially Davos promised some major successes, but as talks proceeded the rifts that had brought them to the table kept them from reaching solutions. Both sides continued to accuse the other of Aegean violations. Neither side would give in on any of the major issues – they were both determined to see the disputes resolved without making any concessions. They also continued to disagree on how to resolve the disputes (ICJ versus negotiations) and on what issues should be discussed at what times and in relation to which other issues. For example, at Davos Greece set a precondition to any meaningful talks: that Turkish troops must either withdraw unconditionally from Cyprus or that a meaningful gesture should be made.

This gesture had to be made prior to a solution of the Cyprus problem and before any dialogue would be entertained. This implied that the Greeks demanded that a ‘solution’ to the Cyprus problem be found before an agreement could be reached on any other outstanding bilateral issues or a programme of economic cooperation. For the Turks, making such a gesture meant that they accepted the view that the Greeks were right, and they were wrong. Furthermore, it was not certain whether the Greeks, once having acknowledged this gesture, would then request further gestures with respect to other problems.<sup>103</sup>

These kinds of problems are typical of those that dominated the Greek/Turkish resolution process in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Many attempts were made, but the unsuccessful efforts were stymied by national pride while the successful endeavors accomplished nothing substantial. Though the Spirit of Davos was still desired by both sides the old sources of friction continued to upstage the hope for resolution in the 1990’s.

Finally, the United States (and other third parties such as the UN, the EU, and NATO) has been intimately involved in trying to bring the two countries into accord. Though U.S. efforts have not always been appreciated by both sides, higher levels of conflict were most likely avoided because of these third party interventions. The Imia/Kardak crisis, for example, did not escalate to fighting because of the intervention of U.S. personnel and initiatives. Other methods of limiting escalation of possible minor incidents into full-scale war (such as a shooting incident) are also in place: the multinational peacekeeping force in Cyprus, UNFICYP, for example, has helped to limit confrontations. Though no similar force exists in the Aegean, the UN and NATO have attempted to implement several preventative measures to try to quell any uprising. Hot lines, transparency of military exercises, and implementation of confidence building measures are UN and NATO mechanisms that, while not optimal, have attempted to help Greece and Turkey avoid military confrontation.<sup>104</sup> Also, top-level diplomats are assigned to the region that offer their services and opinions with a view towards reaching a solution. These are just a few of the ways in which the United States has tried to broker peace in the region.

The United States has in fact pursued three main peacekeeping/peacemaking tracks over the years. The first has been operational prevention, “measures to avoid violence by monitoring to ensure early warning and early response, the use of preventive diplomacy, and a readiness to consider use of sanctions and/or military force.”<sup>105</sup> The second track has been to keep the peacemaking process alive, even if only by a thread, in order to reduce tensions. And the third main track “has been support for longer-term

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

“structural prevention” to build understanding, promote public debate, and create incentives through trade and other forms of mutually beneficial cooperation.”<sup>106</sup> All in all, U.S. efforts over the years have succeeded in preventing serious outbreaks of violence but have not accomplished the long-term goal of peace.

### **C. RECENT INITIATIVES**

While both countries are still deeply suspicious of the other and accuse the other of greed, aggressiveness, threats, and aims on the other’s sovereignty, very recent initiatives from both countries (especially in the late 1990’s) seem to have somewhat ameliorated relations between the two countries. First, similar to the results of Berne, both countries have put forth multiple unilateral goodwill proposals and initiatives expressing ideas how to acquire a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Too numerous to cite directly here, these proposals discuss codes of peaceful conduct for both countries as well as their desire and willingness to resolve the conflicts. When combined with real positive action from both sides they may help to make a difference.

In addition, many confidence building measures have been agreed upon. These include reducing the number of military exercises of the two countries, opening direct lines of communication between their chiefs of general staff, exchanges of visits of ports, joint maneuvers, and coast guard and military aircraft flying unarmed over sensitive areas.<sup>107 108</sup> These confidence building measures may be the first tentative but necessary steps to more trust and consequently bigger and more comprehensive agreements.

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<sup>104</sup> Wilkinson, p. 27.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>107</sup> “Turkish, Greek FMs Add Momentum to Improve Ties,” Xinhua, Worldsources Inc., 18 September 2000.

<sup>108</sup> “Turkey, Greece sign accords, seal “new era” in relations,” Agence France Presse, 20 January 2000.

Also, a bilateral meeting (hosted by the United States) between Turkish President Demirel and Greek Prime Minister Simitis in 1997 led to the Madrid Joint Declaration. This Declaration stresses the mutual desire of both countries to peacefully settle their differences, sums up the principles and mechanisms by which the countries will peacefully settle their differences, and expresses the commitment of both parties to respect the sovereignty of the other.<sup>109</sup> Once again, it is a declaration that, when not betrayed by one or the other country and where national pride does not get in the way, could lead to meaningful progress down the road if further steps are pursued. It is, though, just one more declaration in a string of similar declarations that discusses the mechanisms for dialogue toward a solution but does not get down to solving the real problems.

Moreover, from 1993 to 1995 and again in 1999 Greece and Turkey were involved in bilateral discussions that included trade, economic issues, tourism, culture, the environment, illegal immigration, crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism. These led to the signing of nine agreements on bilateral cooperation, raising hopes that some of the more contentious issues may be resolved next.<sup>110</sup> In addition, increased contact between private businessmen from both sides has shown the possibilities and benefits of expanded economic cooperation. These interactions show that relations have improved and also show that both countries understand that they are in an important part of the world where they must cooperate if either is to have great influence on events and security in their region.

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<sup>109</sup> *Greek-Turkish relations*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/relations.htm> [18 September 2000].

<sup>110</sup> "Cem says Turkey, Greece to discuss Aegean disputes soon," *Agence France Presse*, 13 April 2000.

Finally, the earthquakes in Turkey in August 1999 and Athens in September 1999 “caused an unprecedented wave of popular support for earthquake victims both in Greece and Turkey. Both countries, either through official channels or through private initiative, rallied to the side of each other dispatching medical supplies, equipment and rescue teams to alleviate the plight of earthquake-torn Greeks and Turks.”<sup>111</sup> These natural disasters brought at least some temporary changes in public opinion. Greek and Turkish politicians and citizens have seen that “the other side may not necessarily be our natural enemy,” and relations have consequently warmed to the point that the two countries even decided to submit a joint bid to host the 2008 European Soccer Championship and agreed to organize a youth exchange program between the two countries.<sup>112</sup> Even the press is talking of cooperation and not taking the historic hard line. The earthquakes have thus ironically helped improve relations and have helped to perhaps bring about the undreamt-of opportunity for further rapprochement.<sup>113</sup>

In sum, the resolution progress between Turkey and Greece is a cat and mouse game, marked by proposals, retreats, collaboration, misunderstanding, stagnation, threats, and vanity. In the past few years, both countries have started using rhetoric stating the desirability of reaching peaceful solution, of carrying out confidence building measures based on mutual respect and with a willingness to reach a compromise, and of expecting the other side to adopt the same attitudes. Despite these friendly declarations, though, their actions many times betray these statements.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “Turkish, Greek FMs Add Momentum to Improve Ties,” Xinhua, Worldsources Inc., 18 September 2000.

<sup>113</sup> “Greece and Turkey: Olive Branches,” The Economist, 18 September 1999.

The basic issues in the Aegean and Cyprus have yet to be resolved, but relations between Turkey and Greece have improved, especially in the last year. Infrequent events such as the Imia/Kardak crisis still show the escalatory nature of their relationship, but at the same time it is clear that both sides will almost certainly always stop short of the act of war; the risks are too great, the potential rewards too little, and the outcomes too uncertain. Both governments have some common sense in this regard and they must now use that common sense to move toward resolution of the overall problem. How to move toward that resolution is the question; many possibilities exist but some options and considerations, discussed in the next chapter, seem more likely to work than others.

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## **V. PROSPECTS FOR RESOLUTION**

### **A. THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO RESOLUTION: NATIONALISM**

Since 1974 the Greek-Turkish dispute has cost both countries politically and economically, has been a detriment to NATO and other organizations, and even worse has cost some lives. Many attempts have been made to solve the complex issues, of airspace control to territorial waters, of full sovereignty rights of the Aegean islands to the Cyprus case. The main reason that all of these attempts failed, though, was that neither side could get over her sense of national pride and mistrust of the other country. These psychological barriers are the real reasons that no progress was made at the Davos meeting in 1988, are the reasons that basically no progress has been made since 1974, and are still the main factors impeding Turkey and Greece's resolution process today. "For, although the basis of some of the major disagreements in the Aegean are found in relatively new concepts such as sovereign rights over the continental shelf and conflicting interpretations of recently developed international laws, [one] will recognize that at the heart of many of these issues is the perennial problem of mistrust: fear that one would alter the strategic balance or gain vital resources at the other's expense."<sup>114</sup>

Over the centuries of conflict between the two countries, the strong nationalism has understandably developed from this mistrust of the other. Territorial disagreements are at the heart of these nationalistic feelings, but differences in religion, culture, personality, and ethnic makeup add heat to this fire.<sup>115</sup> Much of the public in both countries displays this nationalism, pride, and at times ingrained animosity toward the

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<sup>114</sup> Bahcheli, p. 4.

other side. These pressures from proud domestic publics are fanned by nationalistic rhetoric from each national media and consequently influence the politicians who are responsible for the resolution process. As a result the politicians find it difficult to overcome these pressures domestically, even if they want to, because they need public political support to remain in power. But in fact more often than not the politicians are themselves nationalistic, cannot overcome the psychological barriers, and therefore do not make the concessions necessary for reaching a solution. Proposals are made that look as if they will help, but in reality they are simply mini-steps that appeal more to the domestic public, press, and even Western governments than really attempt to aid the conflict.<sup>116</sup> Neither side is definitely willing to give in and each often retreats from proposals. The positive statements indicating a desire to work together seem to be consistently overcome by the domestic nationalistic pressures and strong proud governments. Plus, since the resolution process is taking so long, new domestic regimes come into power at various time in both countries and adopt new policies and attitudes, halting any progress that may have been made.

This nationalism was the main reason the Davos meeting broke down and is still the reason no major progress has been made. Some national pride is always desirable within a nation,<sup>117</sup> but in today's post-Cold War world, where most of Europe is at peace and both Greece and Turkey are prospering, there is little reason to maintain the feelings of mistrust toward the other side. Rational analysis of the facts of the dispute indicates that Greece is not at all likely to make the Aegean into a "mare Graecum" or starting

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<sup>115</sup> For a good discussion on these differences, see Stearns, p. 84.

<sup>116</sup> Wilkinson, p. 29.

point for an invasion of Turkey. Likewise, rational analysis indicates that Turkey is not at all likely to use its 4<sup>th</sup> Army to take back the Aegean islands. A shift in mentality and behavior from both sides, as France and Germany underwent in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is therefore required if a solution is ever to be reached.

## **B. PROSPECTS FOR RESOLUTION**

Despite the centuries of conflict between Greece and Turkey, the dispute in the Aegean Sea is a fairly recent one, but one that still must be resolved for many reasons. Most obviously, resolution would settle the question of what activities are and are not allowed by each country and where, minimizing the possibility of hostilities between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean. In addition, resolution would bring more political, military, and social stability and security to the region and, therefore, to NATO and the EU. Both countries would gain more political respectability and clout than they have right now and would improve their national prestige. Both Greece and Turkey would enjoy greatly increased economic opportunities, from resources in the continental shelf to greater numbers of tourists and business partnerships. Resolution would provide undisputed passage through the Aegean to and from the Black Sea for all countries' vessels. NATO would be able to make its crisis management planning and associated measures more effective and efficient and could start looking at the Aegean as a strong point in its common security and stability architecture rather than Greek or Turkish weak points to be defended by each country. Both countries could also cut back on the inordinate amount of money that they currently spend on national defense, relative to other European countries, due to the "threat" from the other side. Resolution would give

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<sup>117</sup> Gilpin, Robert, War & Change in World Politics, p. 150, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1981, and Przeworski, Adam, Democracy and the market, p. 92-93, United Kingdom: Cambridge

more legitimacy to UNCLOS III and further its worldwide adoption as the only true maritime regime. Finally, Greeks and Turks (and in fact Americans, who place great strategic importance on this region and who have spent a great deal of time and money trying to prevent violence and to resolve the disputes)<sup>118</sup> could live more easily knowing that the threat of war is once and for all past.

It is generally accepted that the dispute will not boil into hot war<sup>119</sup>; though they've been at the brink of war many times, for example in 1987 over the oil reserves (see Chapter IV, section B) and 1996 over Imia/Kardak (see Chapter II, section E), at least until now both countries always stop short. Among the reasons for Greece is that she is a much weaker power militarily. Among those for Turkey is that she would be fighting against the UN if she aligned herself with the TRNC versus Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, a damaging move both militarily and diplomatically. War would benefit neither and hurt both. But both also claim that they are ready to fight, and it seems that if absolutely necessary they indeed would. Incidents still occur every few months in the Aegean that hold the potential to escalate the dispute into conflict: both countries still openly accuse the other of not doing enough to help solve the dispute<sup>120</sup>, harassments in the air still occur frequently<sup>121</sup>, and infrequent events such as the Abdullah Öcalan case (where Turkey accused Greece of harboring the Kurdistan Workers' Party

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University Press, 1991.

<sup>118</sup> Liveriou, Liberis, The Implications of the United States Foreign Policy Towards the Cyprus Problem (1959-1974), Masters Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, June 1999. Also see Conostas, p. 161, and Wilkinson, p. 26 and p. 35.

<sup>119</sup> Stearns, p. 141-142, Wilkinson, p. 25, and Schofield and Hocknell, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> "Greece Rejects Turkish Call for Dialog on Aegean Issues," Xinhua, Worldsources Inc., 18 September 2000 and "Turkish Premier: Greece Refuses to Discuss Aegean Disputes," Associated Press, 16 September 2000.

<sup>121</sup> "Greece Rejects Turkish Claims of Aircraft Harassment," Xinhua News Agency, 10 February 2000.

(PKK) leader and terrorist who had been Turkey's greatest domestic enemy<sup>122</sup>) do nothing but hurt. Hopefully these kinds of incidents will not cause the two countries to do anything rash militarily, but the simple fact that the word "hopefully" must be used in a sentence such as this is further proof that the dispute must be settled.

Despite the ever-present potential for armed conflict, the time is currently ripe for a serious resolution process to begin. The earthquakes of 1999 set not only the populace but even the politicians and media in a more amicable state of mind. The other recent initiatives discussed in Chapter IV augment this state of mind. As another example of recent rapprochement, Turkey landed 150 marines and a squadron of F-16 aircraft in Greece during NATO's operation DYNAMIC MIX 2000, neither of which had happened since 1974.<sup>123</sup> Turkish ADM (Ret) Govan Erkaya, former Chief of Naval Operations and advisor to the Prime Minister, even suggested to his peers pulling back the Turkish 4<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>124</sup> In addition, and most encouragingly, the current Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou is pro-resolution and not at all nationalistic like his father, former Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. Papandreou is supported by the Greek Prime Minister Conostas Simitis, and the Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit is also as moderate as there has been in quite some time.<sup>125</sup> The two countries must make the most of the coincidence of these congruous governments. All told, both countries appear to be

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<sup>122</sup> "Turkey, Greece sign accords, seal "new era" in relations," *Agence France Presse*, 20 January 2000.

<sup>123</sup> *New Horizons in Turkish-Greek Relations*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/adeb/01.htm> [18 September 2000].

<sup>124</sup> Discussion between a Turkish naval officer and the author at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, on 7 December 2000.

<sup>125</sup> "Can Greeks love Turks?" *Jane's Information Group Limited, Foreign Report*, 11 November 1999.

ready for a peace process<sup>126</sup> and have put forth many recent unilateral and bilateral initiatives and plans stating their readiness and willingness.

Considering the huge complexity of the different, somewhat interwoven problems and issues as well as the prolonged history of conflict that must be considered in a resolution, it is obvious that a comprehensive solution is and will be difficult to attain. In light of the recent warming of relations and the current opportunity for resolution, though, a few general additional comments on the prospects for resolution are definitely within this thesis's scope and are factors that must be considered by one working on an actual resolution proposal.

The resolution process can certainly be helped by Turkey's current bid to join the EU. Prior to 1999 Greece, EU member since 1981, was opposed to Turkey's bid to join the EU and sometimes, much to Turkish fury, even used a veto of Turkey's potential membership as a "bargaining chip" to try to favorably resolve certain aspects of the Greek-Turkish dispute. Other events, such as the discord brought by the Luxembourg Summit in 1997 and the debate, still ongoing, over how the accession of Cyprus should proceed in light of the Greek-Turkish dispute, increased tensions between Turkey, Greece, and the EU even more. Greece finally realized, though, that prospective Turkish membership would not only benefit Turkey but would as well benefit Greece politically and economically. Greece also understood that withdrawal of her opposition would help to integrate Greece more fully into the EU, from which she had been semi-isolated politically due to her stubbornness over the Greek-Turkish dispute.<sup>127</sup> Helped by the

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<sup>126</sup> *Turkey's Aegean Peace Process Initiative*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. [HTTP] Available: [www.mfa.gov.tr/gfupa/ad/ade/ade/Peace1.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/gfupa/ad/ade/ade/Peace1.htm) [18 September 2000].

<sup>127</sup> "Can Greeks love Turks?" *Jane's Information Group Limited, Foreign Report*, 11 November 1999.

amelioration of relations after 1999, Greece formally withdrew her opposition to the Turkish membership application at the EU Summit in Helsinki in December 1999, and Turkey was accepted as a formal candidate for membership.

Turkey has a long road ahead before she will be eventually accepted as a full EU member, but this road to acceptance will act in a cyclic relationship with the Aegean dispute: the more that Greece and Turkey attempt to solve their dispute, the better Turkey's chances are of completely complying with membership conditions and therefore being accepted as a member of the EU. Likewise, the closer that Turkey gets to becoming a member of the EU, the more that the EU will help solve the Aegean dispute.

On the one hand, one of the requirements for EU membership is resolution of outstanding conflicts with other member-states.<sup>128</sup> “The European Council recalls that strengthening Turkey's links with the European Union also depends on ... the establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey; the settlement of disputes, in particular by legal process, including the International Court of Justice; and support for negotiations under the aegis of the UN on a political settlement in Cyprus on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.”<sup>129</sup> Obviously, the unresolved Aegean dispute still is one of the most detrimental obstacles for Turkey's way to Brussels.

On the other hand, the closer Turkey comes to becoming an EU member, the easier it will (should) be to resolve the Aegean dispute. EU members, in theory at least, are very similar countries; they have similar economies, similar governments, similar

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<sup>128</sup> EU membership criteria are set with the so-called “Copenhagen Criteria.”

values and cultures, etc., or are trying to assimilate all of these. Even the internal borders, though formally existent, are not any longer “dividing lines” due to the Schengen Agreement. Promoting cooperation and lessening hostility are high goals of the EU, and the EU will work hard to try to help an amicable resolution to the conflict come about.<sup>130</sup> “[A]bsorbing a conflicted or disaggregated state into the larger European Union can defuse conflict by “Europeanizing” it.”<sup>131</sup> The EU, in fact, set 2004 as the deadline when the EU would examine the disputes with a view to sending them to the International Court of Justice.<sup>132</sup>

It is not definite that the presence of the EU will help in the resolution process; for example, Turkey has suggested in the past that it may stall NATO enlargement if it fails to receive better treatment from the EU.<sup>133</sup> But in spite of these uncertainties, “[i]ntegration has a security aspect; security has an integration aspect.”<sup>134</sup> This is the cyclic relationship between the Aegean dispute and Turkey’s bid to join the EU that, in spite of the many obstacles faced by the EU, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus in the past, present, and future, could help to bring about the dispute’s resolution.

Another reason for optimism about the prospects for resolution of the Aegean dispute is that the dispute is also currently, due to the strategic importance of Greece,

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<sup>129</sup> The European Union, Luxembourg European Council, 12 and 13 December 1997, Presidency Conclusions, Doc/97/24. [HTTP] Available: <http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec97/htm> [29 October 2000].

<sup>130</sup> Tiersky, Ronald, “Europe Today, The Integration-Security Link,” p. 440, in Tiersky, Ronald, ed., Europe Today, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 439.

<sup>132</sup> “Turkey’s Ecevit Says Time Ripe to Discuss Aegean Disputes with Greece,” Agence France Presse, 8 October 2000.

<sup>133</sup> Schofield and Hocknell, p. 19.

<sup>134</sup> Tiersky, Ronald, “Introduction,” p. 4, in Tiersky, Ronald, ed., Europe Today, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.



Turkey, and the Aegean, a high priority for the United States, a situation that should do nothing but help the resolution process.

Tensions on Cyprus, Greek-Turkish disagreements in the Aegean and Turkey's relationship with the EU have serious implications for regional stability and the evolution of European political and security structures. Our goals are to stabilize the region by reducing long-standing Greek-Turkish tensions and pursuing a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus.<sup>135</sup>

The United States has the potential, as seen during the Imia/Kardak incident, to help achieve a solution that the two sides could not reach by themselves. The United States has the military power to back both countries (in the event, say, of a treaty of non-aggression between Greece and Turkey calling for the mutual withdrawal of their troops) and the political leverage to push them to get things done. Though she has been unsuccessful over the years at brokering a long-term solution and though she must strive not to push so hard as to alienate either Greece or Turkey, continued proactive effort from U.S. diplomats will help all involved. After all, the American voice and support at least command attention.

The prospects for resolution are thus currently promising. Several observations about the resolution process are therefore appropriate. First, a fair solution that considers the special circumstances of the Aegean Sea should be attained in the spirit not only of Greece and Turkey's national interests but also international law as set forth in numerous international treaties, resolutions, agreements, and maps. The spirit and intent of UNCLOS III, for example, should be of utmost importance (with an eventual goal of Turkey acceding to this international regime). The real problem is that many of these legal documents and countless maps are old, outdated, and contradictory. Thus the

Aegean dispute is not at all a dispute over true sovereignty; it is a dispute over the interpretation of these documents. A good place to start, therefore, would be to update, or at least align, these many documents.

Second, all of the topics discussed in Chapter II need to be settled within a comprehensive framework because they are linked, and a solution to one directly affects another. The issue of territorial waters, for example, cannot be solved without affecting and being affected by the continental shelf dispute. Also, the concessions that each side will need, to some degree, to make in order to reach a resolution will connect the various issues together: for example, Greece could openly agree not to exercise – now or ever – her right under UNCLOS III to extend her territorial seas to 12 miles (a right that she will obviously never exercise) in exchange for Turkey rescinding her demand that Greece demilitarize the eastern Aegean islands (which really do not pose any threat to Turkey).

Third, as most EU countries are also NATO countries<sup>135</sup>, their security concerns normally overlap. Because of its relationship to the EU and the problems that the dispute has caused it, NATO – in cooperation with the EU - should be playing a much larger active role, backed by the United States, in trying to resolve the dispute. A more active role would show both countries that NATO does in fact not favor the other (as they believe) but indeed cares that this dispute be resolved. It would provide the two countries with a powerful third party presence that would push the countries more forcefully toward resolution and also keep potential conflicts from flashing into any armed fighting. This effort from a neutral NATO might consequently elicit more individual effort from

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<sup>135</sup> The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, p. 31, December 1999.

<sup>136</sup> Eleven out of fifteen EU member-nations hold dual memberships; the exceptions are Ireland, Sweden, Finland, and Austria.

Greece and Turkey to move more steadily towards resolution initiatives on their own. What is evident is that a third party, no matter who that party is, will be mandatory to help resolve this dispute; Greece and Turkey are not currently capable of solving it on their own, and a third party, whether NATO, the EU, the ICJ, the United States, or the UN, can provide the neutrality, pressure, and military and political support that can crack the deadlock, get through both sides' nationalism, and help to broker a solution.

When national pride interprets flexibility as weakness and tradeoffs as capitulations, a third party can sometimes assume enough of the political risk to enable the disputants to reach a settlement that serves their longer-term interests. In assuming the risk itself, the third party may of course endanger its own interests by alienating one or both of the parties directly involved. This is why NATO has been so reticent about Greek-Turkish differences in recent years. But there are also risks in reticence, and one of them is that an inherently unstable status quo will explode into violence that no one wants but no one has done much to prevent.<sup>137</sup>

### C. CONCLUSION

Greece and Turkey are far from agreeing on a solution to the dispute, much less a process to get to a solution. But the time may now be right to proceed with a resolution process. The earthquakes, which brought great disaster, also brought the unforeseen and fortunate amelioration of relations. The current governments of Greece and Turkey are also much more open to rapprochement than in the past. Three general factors have over the years affected conflict resolution: domestic government stability, powerful and innovative principal decision makers in both countries, and constructive external influences (i.e., third parties).<sup>138</sup> These three factors can now for the first time in 25 years be satisfied in the Aegean dispute. This "window of opportunity," though, might be open for only a short time, and if Greece, Turkey, and potential third parties do not take

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<sup>137</sup> Stearns, p. 82.

advantage of this occasion it may be years before such an opportunity again presents itself.

Combining the improved relations with real effort to follow through with such agreements like the Berne Declaration, the Davos meeting, and the Madrid Joint Declaration could lead to real progress. Both countries, though, need to stop only talking about improving relations; they need to actually take action towards solutions. They also need to stop playing their political games, such as urging the other side to finally get serious about resolving the conflict, and make bilateral concessions in the name of a more peaceful and prosperous situation. The confidence building measures of the past couple years are a great starting point and help to start building mutual trust. The mutual politico-economic gains of an ensuing resolution vastly outweigh the individual politico-military desires of deadlock. Once again, involvement and active engagement of a third party can provide the impartiality, pressure, and backing to make this happen.

Many obstacles to reconciliation still exist and must be overcome. Both countries believe that the current state of festering conflict is generally acceptable because it preserves the interests that both countries call vital. Both countries believe that their current approach and stance is viable. There is a lack of Greek and Turkish confidence that the approach proposed by the other side would lead to fair and equitable results. And more importantly, the pervasive mistrust and deep sense of nationalism persist.<sup>139</sup> Greece and Turkey must both try harder to overcome these disincentives; peace, stability, and common security would benefit them both. No major new clever formulas are needed; far more important are the willingness and final desire to work together and compromise

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<sup>138</sup> Conostas, p. 7-8.

in order to get a mutually beneficial solution. The issues in this case are complex and the factors to consider, including not only territorial claims but also nationalism and ethnicity, are many. But if in fact they can be “jolted off the pedestals on which they have stood for so long with such absolute moral certainty,”<sup>140</sup> then perhaps a resolution can be reached which will benefit all parties involved for years to come.

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<sup>139</sup> Wilkinson, p. 33.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

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